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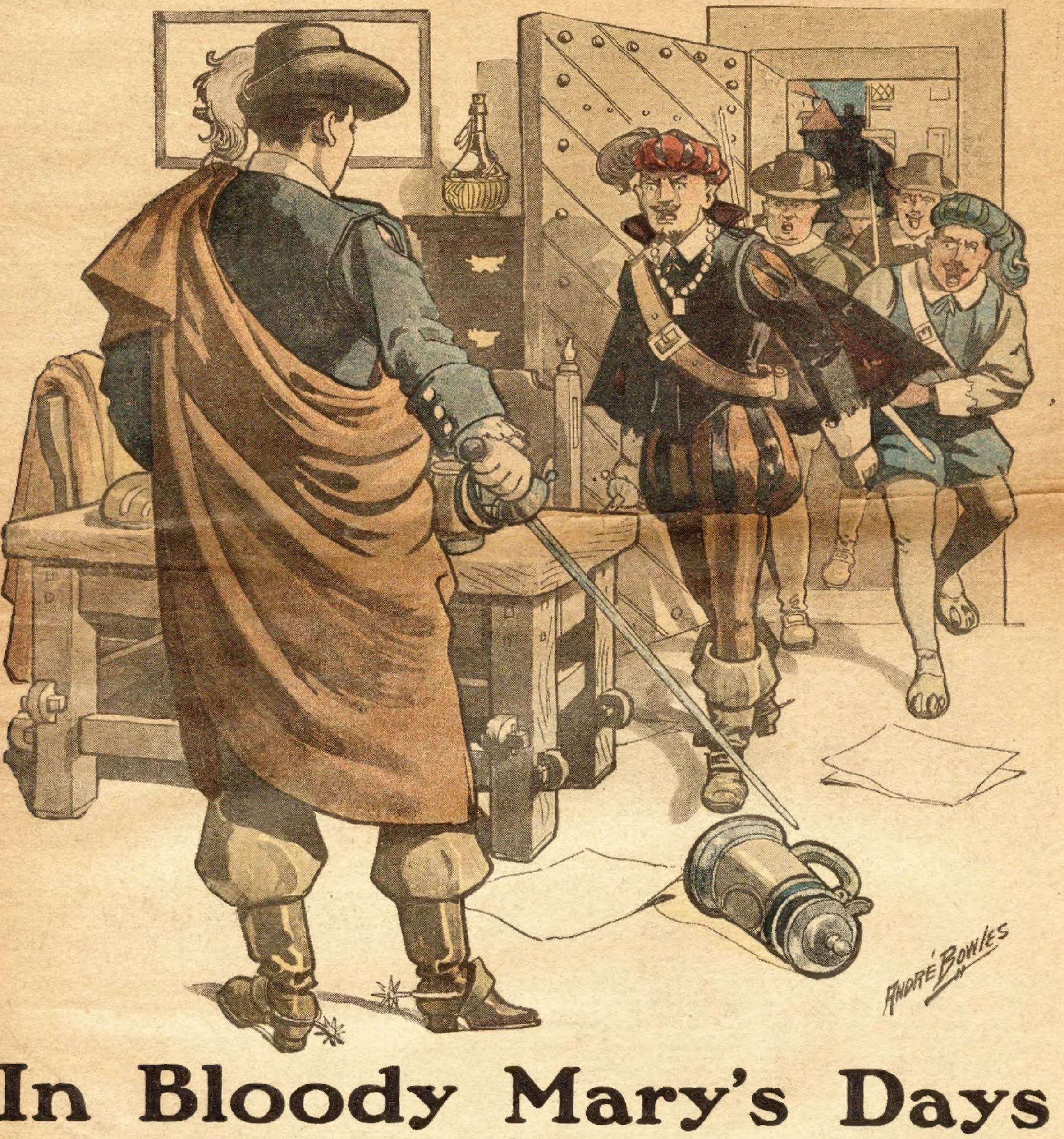

In Bloody Mary's Days

-:- Or, -:-

The Nottingham Maid

By T. C. Harbaugh

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CHAPTER I.

A LOVELIER day had never visited the coast of Nottingham. Autumn had arrived with her varied hues and on the high rocks that overlooked the little bay called The Wash, were countless hundreds of fowl. The waters danced like quicksilver in the warm afternoon sun, and here and there were late flowers blooming at the very edge of the greenish tide.

A little back from the bay stood an arbor neatly built, with its vine-covered door looking out upon the sea, and within the portal sat a young girl with an open book in her hand. She had been reading, but as tho the landscape was far more interesting than the volume, she had discarded it and was gazing out upon the entrancing scene before her.

Lucy Lallire was in part French, but she had been brought up in Nottingham, tho she had not entirely forgotten her girlhood days in France. Her people were more than well-to-do, tho they were not classed as wealthy. Her father had been compelled to fly from his native land on account of too much free speech when every land in Europe had a king.

Her beauty was of the brunette type, her figure well rounded, and in her deep and soulful black eyes rested a light capable of ensnaring the most cynical man. She had just reached her nineteenth year, and being the only lass in the family, she had been the petted one of the household.

The vine-covered doorway of the bower would have concealed her from many, but all at once the vines were drawn aside and the little start on the girl's part caused the book to fall to the ground.

A young man stooped and picked it up.

"'Plutarch,' eh?" he exclaimed, glancing from the title to the girl. "Do such things interest you?"

The cheeks of Lucy Lallire flushed a little before she spoke, and then a smile gathered about her ripe lips.

"I did not know what else to read," said she, "nor can I tell why old Plutarch has interested me from childhood."

"It is a brave book," was the answer. "It seems a book of living heroes, and yet all had been dead for centuries."

Gilbert Montjoy had entered the bower and stood erect with arms folded upon his bosom. They had been playmates from childhood. They had chased the swallows along the beach, had climbed the hills in search of birds' nests, and had even waded into the clear waters of The Wash in their search for mussels. She noted suddenly that his face had grown strangely sober.

"Meseems," said the girl, with a pretty toss of her head, "that you should take orders. You are as grave as a monk."

"I am going away," was the reply. "This very day I turn my face toward London."

"Why to London, pray?"

"It is time for me to take possession of my inheritance. You remember that my father died in London ten years ago. I was the only child. He had not much to will away, and all that he left I suppose is to be mine. The bequests have been left in trust to one Captain Blunderblade, who has a house in Blackfriars and——"

"What a singular name," put in Lucy, with a light laugh. "With such a name he would make a good Sancho Panza. Just the fellow to war with windmills, I should say. But what about him?"

"I saw him but once, and then almost to my sorrow. Father took me to London one year before he died, and our companion was this Captain Blunderblade. He was then something of a swashbuckler, since he took pleasure in hunting up the drinking inns such as the Black Owl and the Devil's Nose, and more than once we three had to race for our lives. I don't know whether Captain Blunderblade has sowed all his wild oats or not, but he is the man who has charge of my fortune, whatever it is, and I am obliged to go to him for it."

"You know what London has become under the reign of Mary who married the Spaniard?"

"I have heard much of it, and it is not good."

"She burns those whom she hates and has the kingdom in a turmoil all the time. Some of the best men in England have lost their heads. Lady Jane Grey has lost hers, also and I cannot count them all. They bestowed a good name on the Queen when they called her 'Bloody Mary.' I like not your going to London at this time, Gilbert."

"But I am not to have doings with the Queen. I am going there simply as Gilbert Montjoy of Nottingham in search of the little left him by an honest father."

"But you may fall among thieves," persisted Lucy, her face losing some of its roseate freshness. "There are dark ways in London. It is a thieves' paradise, according to all reports."

"I saw much of it when I was there as a boy," smiled Montjoy. "Captain Blunderblade took me everywhere. I am as familiar with the city as are some of its inhabitants."

"Will you take Tyrus with you?" asked the girl.

"No," said Montjoy. "Tyrus is all right in Nottingham, but he would lose his head to the first pretty wench he met, and you know what that means, dear?"

"Tyrus is too old to fall in love," ventured Lucy.

"Pish!" cried Montjoy, snapping his fingers. "No man gets too old to resist the schemes of Cupid. I desire no handicap when I go to London."

"Very well, then. You say you set out today?"

"This evening, an hour before sunset."

"When will you return?"

"When I have taken possession of my inheritance."

The fair girl turned her face from him and looked out across the glimmering bay. There was moisture in her eyes and her cheeks went back to white again.

Suddenly she began to undo the blue ribbon that encircled her throat. A little gold locket dangled from the ribbon and taking it in her hands she rose to her feet.

"You will take this little talisman with you, Gilbert?" she said, looking into his eyes. "It is not much, only a locket with my poor face in it. You will wear it all the time and think of the little girl in Nottingham."

Their lips touched as Lucy's slender hands fastened the ribbon about his neck, and then he drew off a pace.

"I will walk with you to the blasted tree," she whispered. "I must see you, Gilbert, as long as I can."

They left the bower and took a little path that led past a blasted oak known all over the country. A strange silence had fallen between them. There were fears in both hearts, there was love in their bosoms, and when they reached the riven tree Lucy gently put her arms around her lover.

"Remember," said she, looking into his face, "remember that London is the hotbed of intrigue, sin and shame. Men live there by the fruits of their swords. Queen Mary is on the throne, and do not forget this for a moment. I am told that they who think themselves secure in London are nearest the block——"

"But what has Mary to do with a Nottingham youth?" he interrupted. "She will never know that I am in her capital. And I assure you, dear, that I shall not acquaint her of my arrival."

"I know! I know!" exclaimed the girl. "But there is that man with the strange name."

"He was my father's friend, and I have no doubt he has kept my inheritance as he would keep his own gold."

"Did not your father die in London?" suddenly asked the girl.

"Sooth he did," was the reply. "His death is wrapped in some mystery."

"Ah, there you go already, hunting danger even before you have set foot in London! Let that mystery rest."

"Captain Blunderblade must know something about it——"

"And you will question him?"

"I feel it my duty to do so. But see where the sun is, dear. I must be on my way. The good horse is equipped in the stall and longs to carry me to my inheritance."

Montjoy disengaged himself from the girl's embrace and turned away. He had not the courage to look back. Had he done so he would have seen the girl beside the oak, looking after him with all the love of a woman's heart.

He walked on till a little hill hid him from her sight and then came to a sudden halt. Turning swiftly on his heel he threw out his hands and exclaimed:

"Fear not, sweet one! I will return from the nets and snares of wolfish London. I will come back with my inheritance, whatever it is, and lay it at your feet. You are worth to me all the gold that ever glittered and all the loves of this world. Not many days shall separate us. I will return and then, hand in hand, we will walk the clovered paths of happiness to the end of life."

He ceased suddenly and turned away. Now his face was really set toward London. He so longed for the future that if at that moment its veil had been lifted he would not have taken a backward step.

CHAPTER II.

Such a night as that of November 10, 1556, old London had not seen in many a year. A high wind swept the city from end to end, carrying with it great sheets of rain which drove pedestrians indoors and compelled those whose duty it was to watch the town to cower wherever they could find the slightest shelter. Boats in the Thames were torn from their moorings and jammed into an almost inextricable mass against the piers. There was no letup to the terrible downpour which had prevailed for hours, and the superstitious thought that the end of creation was near at hand.

It was the old London, the London of narrow winding streets, palaces and hovels, stretching for miles with their old-fashioned porches, dormer windows, and all so much alike that a man staggering home from a night at the Black Owl had difficulty in finding his rest. Signs were being blown down, littering the narrow streets, and now and then a roof followed them as the wind got beneath the old material and played its havoc there.

It was in the midst of this spasm of nature that a solitary horseman turned into Blackfriars. He was cloaked, but the covering had not saved him from a complete drenching. He was literally soaked by the rain, and his steed was dripping from head to foot.

Gilbert Montjoy had timed his arrival in London for night, when he would attract no attention. He thought that he would have no difficulty in finding the abode of Captain Blunderblade, for he remembered it as it was in his boyhood when he went there once with his father and saw the inside of the "den," for it reminded him of nothing else.

But Blackfriars that night was a labyrinth. The place was littered with the debris of the storm, and besides, the cresset lights had been extinguished, and no lamplighter had had the courage to renew them.

The storm seemed to advance as he proceeded. New gusts shook the tenements, until Montjoy, fearful that he would be actually blown from the saddle, sought shelter underneath a projecting roof of a house, the outlines of which he could barely see.

All at once there was a shriek. Something had collided with his horse and he heard a woman's cry.

"Pardon, master!" cried the creature whose arm Montjoy caught as he swooped downward like an eagle. "'Fore God I did not see you!"

"Never mind," smiled the young adventurer, abating none of his grip. "Can you tell me where I will find Captain Blunderblade?"

"What! that sodden wretch?" and Montjoy knew that the bedraggled speaker was looking up at him.

"I would have speech with him," the youth returned. "I want shelter, too, from this storm."

"Did you look in at the Black Owl?"

"Sooth, I have forgotten where that nest is situated. But direct me to the Captain's house and your reward shall be a sovereign."

"More money than I have seen in a year," was the reply. "I'll tell you where heaven is for less than that."

Gilbert laughed. "I'm not seeking the latter place just now," he answered, with a little chuckle, and finding the woman's hand, he put a sovereign in it, and felt the long thin fingers close about it as tho it was a crown jewel.

"It is the third house further down," the poor creature said. "You will know it by the horseshoe nailed to the heavy door. And you'll be fortunate, master, if Captain Blunderblade doesn't devour you before you can escape his teeth."

Montjoy straightened in his saddle and bade the woman good night. He was near his journey's end. He had a faint recollection that he had seen the horseshoe once before, and wondered why it had slipped his mind.

Shaking the dampness from his garments, he left his shelter and moved on. He had already discovered that the houses were all alike, all had porch-like projections in front, and above each was the inseparable dormer window. He was near his legacy and soon he would know what his father had left him.

In a few moments he leaned to the right and put his hand on a door. Yes, there it was, just as the unknown woman had told him, and he ran his hand over the horseshoe in unuttered satisfaction.

After a minute's inspection of the premises he knocked, but there was no response. Was Captain Blunderblade still wassailing at the Black Owl, or mayhap at the Devil's Nose, places which suited him best?

He suddenly became aware that there was a light in the house, as he could see thru a crooked crack in the portal. His heart took a leap into his throat. The man he sought was at home.

Disgusted at having no response to his raps, Gilbert dismounted, and, still holding his horse's rein, pushed the door open.

The room which his act revealed was lighted by a candle in a brass candlestick on a table in the center of the room. He saw that the floor was covered with rushes, that there was but one chair in the place, and that a poor portrait of Henry VIII., the wife killer, gazed at him from the wall. But this was not all he saw.

At the table sat a man with his head bent over and half concealed by a pair of massive arms. On the table itself was a mug for sack and a large glass stood near it.

He doubted not that he had found Captain Blunderblade in a drunken stupor, and for a moment he thought of turning back and waiting till morning before tackling the lion in his den. But thought of his mission and of the storm drove such ideas from his head. His horse was fairly well sheltered by now, and he resolved to go forward and trust to any luck that might await him.

He entered the room on tiptoe, and in a second stood alongside the table, looking down upon a giant figure which had not been moved by the intrusion.

Captain Blunderblade was in a deep slumber, for which too much ale can be blamed. His breathing was heavy and sonorous, and that part of his face visible to Montjoy was as red as a cooked lobster. But the man from Nottingham could not remain there forever silent, and at last, with worn-out patience, his hand fell heavily upon the Captain's shoulder.

In an instant there was a start and a pair of bloodshot eyes glared upward at Montjoy.

"I beg your pardon," said Gilbert. "It is a stormy night outside, and——"

"And I don't keep an inn!" roared Captain Blunderblade. "You will find the Spotted Pigeon a little farther on. But who are you, young sir, to thus disturb an old man who was just entering paradise escorted by a legion of peris?"

The idea of this sodden giant being escorted by peris so drew on Montjoy's risibles that he burst into a laugh.

"You can dream of the peris again," said he. "As to who I am, do I look like a Montjoy?"

Instantly the countenance of Captain Blunderblade underwent a change.

"You don't tell me?" he exclaimed, rising to his feet. "You have come for your heritage, I suppose?"

"That is just what brought me to London. I am 22. I have come from Nottingham for what my father left in your charge for me."

Captain Blunderblade snatched the candle from the table and held it close to Gilbert's face.

"You have your father's eyes!" he exclaimed. "A blind man could see that. And pray, how much gold, think you, I have been keeping according to Thomas Montjoy's will?"

"But little," smiled Gilbert, "for my father never had a surplus of gold."

"You are right, young sir. The little he had vanished the night we found him on the banks of the Thames insensible. But his will was in my hands before that. Now, sir, you shall see how Captain Blunderblade has kept his word with the dead."

The giant crossed the room and opened a closet in one corner. This he did with a heavy iron key which he took from a doublet pocket.

"It is not gold, neither is it jewelry," Gilbert heard him say. "It is something that may give you fame and riches in the end."

The Captain turned suddenly and came forward, carrying something in a narrow wooden box. This he deposited on the table and began to unscrew the wooden lid. Montjoy watched him narrowly.

"Behold your legacy, sir!" said Blunderblade. "It is neither gold nor gems, but it is a heritage of steel. This is all your father left you, and with it you are to carve your way thru the world."

Gilbert had already fallen back with a little cry of astonishment, for in the box lay the handsomest rapier he had ever looked upon. Captain Blunderblade had spoken truly. His heritage was one of steel.

CHAPTER III.

THE unexpected coming of Gilbert seemed to have sobered Captain Blunderblade almost instantly.

"Yes," said the dweller in Blackfriars, pointing to the rapier, "that is your heritance, my boy. It is a good blade, for I am somewhat of an expert with the rapier, and knuckle under to no one."

Montjoy stepped forward and lifted the blade from its box, bending the white steel to test it, after which he looked at his companion with a satisfied smile.

"It is a true sword," said he.

"None better in the kingdom," was the reply. "Hast ever used a rapier, boy?"

"Only in practice," replied Gilbert. "I have been taught the use of the sword by old Tyrus, who used to live in London, but who is now in Nottingham."

"What is he like?" asked Captain Blunderblade, leaning forward.

"Much like other men," smiled Gilbert. "He would be a perfect man but for one shoulder which is stooped——"

"And a scar over his left eye?"

"Yes."

"I thought as much!" cried Captain Blunderblade. "Did he ever speak of me?"

"Not to my knowledge."

"Then he never told the story of the scar? Ha, ha!"

"He never mentioned it."

"By the saints, he keeps his secrets well, does old Tyrus! I gave him that scar. It was in the Black Owl and long ago. So the old fellow got into Nottingham? A quiet place for one of his ilk, I should say. But pardon me, young sir. You have a horse?"

"He is out under the porch at this moment."

"We will have him stabled and see that he has good provender for bringing you all the way to London for your legacy."

Captain Blunderblade found a lantern, which he lighted, and led the way thru a gate alongside the house to a small stable, where Gilbert's mount was soon nibbling his food in the dry.

When the two were back in the house Captain Blunderblade turned suddenly upon his guest.

"You have reached London at a stirring time," said he. "We are in the midst of a mystery which overlooks all others. Mary, the Queen, is burning and beheading nearly every day and some good gentlemen are going to their graves without their heads. My Lord Sheffield went but this day, and it is rumored that Earl Stonehedge will follow him tomorrow. The mystery is that of the missing Countess of Selkirk. Rumors of it may have reached Nottingham?"

"They missed my ear if they have," answered Gilbert.

"Lady Selkirk was one of the high-bred belles of London. Witty, learned and a little given to flirtation, she has sailed like a full-rigged ship into the deepest waters of society. Of course, she had lovers by the score. One night, a month ago, she disappeared as completely as tho the ground had opened at her feet and engulfed her. I never heard of anything like it. She's been kidnaped. She was seized one night in her garden, and her slipper was found at the gate in the garden wall. There the trail ends. All London has been searching for the missing Countess, but we are as far from the solution of the mystery as ever."

"He must have been a bold lover to perform a trick like that," suggested Gilbert.

"You are guessing now," said Captain Blunderblade. "Was it a lover's trick? I doubt not there are men among us capable of robbing London of her greatest beauty, but did a lover turn the trick in the garden?"

Gilbert was silent. Captain Blunderblade sat in his chair drumming on the table with his fingers

"Tell me," he suddenly exclaimed, "did you encounter any one on the pave while making your way to my abode?"

"No one but a bedraggled woman who collided with my horse, and from whom I rightly located you."

"A woman, say you? What sort of hag was she?"

"I could not see her well for the darkness and the rain. I fancy from her voice that she was rather youngish and——"

"The same creature!" cried Blunderblade, striking the board with his great fist. "Said she anything derogatory to my character?"

"Not a word against you."

"'Tis a wonder," grimaced the giant. "She gives me no little trouble, tho I count her harmless. Montjoy, I am not quite so black as they paint me. There's a streak of goodness in Captain Blunderblade, but now and then he gets into a tantrum and proceeds to clean out the Black Owl and the Devil's Nose. But let us get back to the mystery of Lady Selkirk. I say it is no lover's trick. The mystery is as dark today as when they found her slipper at the garden gate. The old Count's reward has brought nothing from the darkness. I have the poster here.'

Captain Blunderblade rummaged in a drawer and brought to light a paper the print of which was large enough to be noticed from a distance.

"Here it is," said he, looking at Montjoy as he straightened out the sheet. "Listen:

"'Five Thousand Pounds Reward:

"'To Whom It May Concern and to the World at Large: The undersigned, Richard Selkirk, will pay five thousand pounds to the person, or persons, who delivers safe into his hands his daughter, Lady Selkirk, who mysteriously disappeared on the 11th of October, being kidnaped by persons unknown while walking in her garden. Lady Eleanor left behind no clew to her vanishment, but it is believed by sundry people that she has fallen into the hands of a lot of villains who hope to hold her for ransom. The above reward in good and lawful currency of the realm will be paid for the return to her home of Lady Eleanor, now retained somewhere against her will.

"'COUNT HENRY SELKIRK, of THE YEWS.'"

Captain Blunderblade did not raise his head till he had reached the end of the poster.

"There you are," said he, with a little laugh which gave a new light to his countenance. "Methinks one would like to pocket the reward, eh?"

"He surely would," answered Gilbert, as he thought of his humble home in Nottingham and of the young girl waiting to become his bride.

"I'm going after it," exclaimed Blunderblade. "There's good adventure in the hunting of Lady Selkirk. Why not hunt with me, boy?"

It was a blunt proposition, spoken with bluntness, and it struck Montjoy boldly.

"You are not obliged to go home immediately after getting your heritage?" continued the giant, before his visitor could reply. "You haven't been to London for years, and I can show you some excellent sport if you will enter into a partnership with me in the hunt for Lady Eleanor."

"I am not compelled to get back at once to Nottingham," Gilbert returned.

"Think of it, my boy. It will give you a chance to test the heritage of steel and to prove if old Tyrus' training amounts to anything. Say the word and we'll try for the reward. It's not to be lightly laughed aside."

"I'll try the game with you!" exclaimed Gilbert, holding out his hand, which Captain Blunderblade seized with avidity. "Something tells me that we will take up the reward and I will have enough to play gentleman the remainder of my life. Two heads are better than one, anyhow, and where the trails leads, Blunderblade & Company will be found like faithful hounds."

Until now Gilbert had not thought of his drenched clothes, and he proceeded to dry them by the fire on the ample hearth, while his companion busied himself setting out a repast which he had brought from the kitchen of the nearest inn.

The storm was over by now and the wind had gone back to its lair. People emerged from their houses and once more appeared on the street.

Gilbert found the meal appetizing, for it was washed down with a mug of ale, and when he had pushed back his chair he turned to compliment Captain Blunderblade.

"Why, the old fellow's gone!" he exclaimed, staring at vacancy, "I did not hear him go, for the meal was too good to leave off in the middle. But he'll come back and then——"

At that moment the door was pushed inward and Gilbert was instantly on his feet.

"Spit the old rogue like a hare!" cried a loud voice from the midst of the men who had leaped into the room. "Put an end to the old tiger's night raids where gentlemen congregate. Down with Captain Blunderblade!"

Montjoy, who had gained the box containing the rapier, snatched it out of its nest, and, clutching it firmly like one who was confident of his mastership, faced the men with defiant mien.

The little mob paused and then fell back, and Gilbert, looking into their faces, told them that an attack might prove very costly. But they had already seen this.

CHAPTER IV.

THE defiance with which Gilbert greeted the mob in velveteen doublets and swords somewhat startled them. Instead of finding Captain Blunderblade, whom they sought, they had come face to face with a person whom they had never seen. They drew back at sight of Montjoy and disappeared as suddenly as they had come upon the scene.

Gilbert went to the door and looked out. He could see seven figures vanishing up the street, and presently they passed beyond the glare of the relighted cressets and were gone. He returned to the house, wondering over the singular adventure and trying to account for the Captain's abrupt departure.

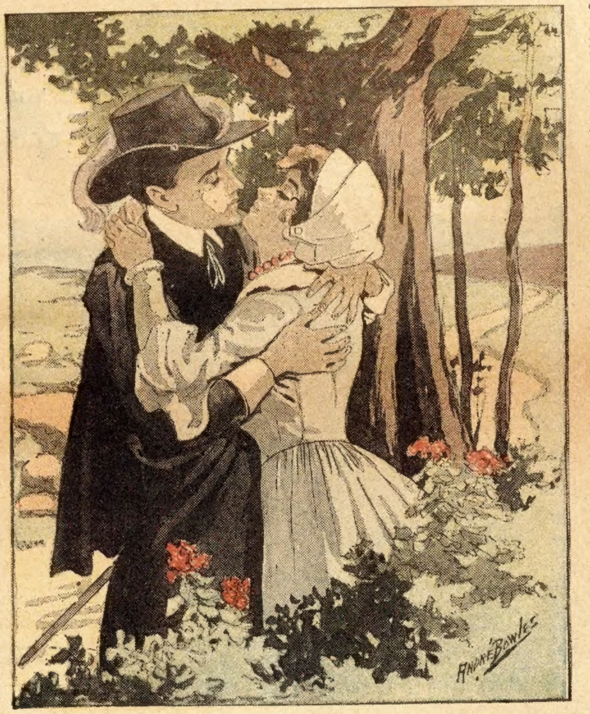
In the midst of his speculations he heard a heavy step, accompanied by the slamming of a door, and upon turning he saw Captain Blunderblade barring the portal with a heavy oak plank fashioned for that very purpose.

"They don't catch old Jack napping," breathed the Captain, as he finished his labor. "When they come, as come they may this very night, they will find the lion with his claws sharpened."

The speaker paid no attention to Montjoy till he had filled a mug with ale which he brought to the table.

The youth from Nottingham noticed how changed he was. The Captain seemed to have aged ten years in the brief time he had been absent. He gulped down his drink like a wild beast, and set down the empty mug with a thud that rattled the dishes on the table.

"I found her!" he cried, looking up at Montjoy. "It is a sly rat that escapes Jack Blunderblade."



Their lips touched.

Gilbert wondered.

"You found whom?" he ventured.

"The wench who collided with your horse in the storm," was the reply. "She came back. I heard her step at the door, and when I opened it she was flying down the street. I took after her, of course. It was a nice run under the cressets, but I never let her get out of my sight. It is a good hound that always keeps the track. She made for the bridge over which you must have crossed, and at the end of it she stumbled, and the next minute I had caught my hare."

"What! You caught the poor woman?" ejaculated Gilbert.

"That I did, and a good catch it was!" cried Blunderblade, rubbing his great hands gleefully. "I have been wanting to get hold of her for five years, but until tonight she was as slippery as an eel. I was always a second too late, ha, ha! But tonight, thank Heaven, it was otherwise. I picked her up, and she snarled in my face just as she used to do. But she'll snarl no more at Jack Blunderblade."

"What did you do?" cried Gilbert, springing forward and clutching Blunderblade's arm. "Surely you didn't harm the poor thing?"

"Eh? Go ask the Thames!" exclaimed the man, drawing back, while his eyes got the gleam of a wolf's.

Horror was depicted on Montjoy's face. He felt all the contempt he was capable of feeling for the man who had held his legacy in trust. What sort of wild beast was he?

"Then, by my life, I regret you were not here when the bloodletters came," he said as mildly as he could.

"What, were they here?"

"Yes, seven of them."

"Men in velvet?"

"Yea, and armed to the teeth."

"They were looking for old Jack, I presume?"

"They were not looking for me," replied Gilbert, with a smile. "They went their way when they discovered that I was the only tenant of this room."

"Had I been here they would have met their match," cried Blunderblade, with a show of braggadocio. "They made a narrow escape, I say, Montjoy."

"But the woman on the bridge?" said Gilbert, who could not forget the Captain's cool-blooded narrative. "You threw her into the Thames?"

"Why not?" grimaced the giant. "She's been my scourge for five years."

"Who was she?"

"Never you mind, young sir," was the answer. "Let that secret be mine, for she keeps it no longer."

"It was a dastardly, cowardly piece of business!" and the young man's words were shot squarely into Blunderblade's face. "I say fairly to you, Captain Blunderblade, that it was the act of a merciless villain."

Montjoy, as he spoke, laid his hand on his rapier's hilt, expecting to have his words resented, but Captain Blunderblade made no warlike movement, simply resting his body against the table and grinning like a fiend.

"I'm going away," continued Gilbert. "You need not escort me to the stable, for I can find my horse. I thank you for keeping my legacy so long, but I cannot remain with one who hurls a poor woman from London Bridge."

"Just as you please, sir, but there is our compact, to hunt for Lady Eleanor Selkirk and divide the reward."

"Take all of it," said Gilbert. "I do not care for gold which has to pass thru your fingers."

"It is all right, sir. Remember that you take with you none o' Jack Blunderblade's ill will. Whenever you want his help you have but to sound the call, and he'll be on hand in a moment."

"I think with this," Gilbert touched his sword, "I will be able to make my way thru London. Good night, Captain."

There was a slight pressure of hands, and Gilbert stole out of the house by a rear door and made his way to the stable. To find his mount was no task, and in a minute, mounted once more, he was moving thru Blackfriars in search of an inn where he could spend the night without being the associate of a murderer.

Suddenly he drew rein and looked around. He had come to the meeting of two streets, and knew that he was not far from the bridge.

"Why not?" he said aloud to himself. "The chances are against me. Ere this the black tide has carried Captain Blunderblade's victim far away, covering the crime of a night. Why did he kill that poor creature, and why did I not plunge my rapier into his hide in avengement of her?"

Almost unconsciously he turned his horse's head toward the river. Thoughts of a rest at some inn disappeared in a moment, and now but one thing obsessed him.

The lamplighters had resumed their work after the toll of the storm, and London was becoming herself again, as Gilbert could observe by the merriment that came from the coffeehouses and the dens of sin.

"It must have been here," said he, pulling up at the end of the bridge which loomed between him and the thousand-and-one lights beyond it. "Here the deed was committed, and from here Blunderblade tossed his victim to the tide."

He got down, and holding the bridle, began to search the spot as well as he could under the circumstances. He could see in the wet ground the tracks of a man's boots, and at last made out the imprint of a delicate hand.

His heart beat with vengeance as he looked at these clews; he saw Captain Blunderblade seated in his room over his mug, chuckling at the murder his great hands had committed. His ire tugged at him like a strong man, an unseen hand seemed to push him back over the way he had just come. But no! Some day he would reckon with this murderer, some time he would show Captain Blunderblade that there comes to all evildoers a day of reckoning on this earth.

He now moved to the edge of the pier, upon which was set a watch-light, and looked down at the edge of the sullen water.

"What is that down there?" leaped suddenly from his lips. "Is it possible that the Thames is more merciful than Jack Blunderblade? There's a dress down yonder and a white face. The tide did not connive at the monster's crime."

Montjoy lowered himself over the dull edge of the abutment and calculated in his mind the distance to the water's edge. Holding to the stones for half a minute, he let himself drop, and alighted on slippery ground some distance below. It required an effort to maintain an upright position, but he had youth and nimbleness to help him, and in a little while he was looking for the figure he had seen from above.

There it lay with the light falling aslant upon it, but enough to reveal the white face and the bedraggled garments. Gilbert was stooping over it breathless, his hand over the heart and his face almost touching the one beneath him.

"There's a spark of life left," he ejaculated. "This is Blunderblade's victim and the same woman whom I met in Blackfriars. Where is a boat? Where is some one to help me? The spark of life must not go out. What ho! there!" He was calling to a dark object that was moving on the surface of the water.

The darkish thing approached and Gilbert hailed it again. A boat crept out of the gloom and grounded at his feet. Gilbert lifted the woman in his arms.

"A murderer's victim," he said to the startled boatman. "Take me somewhere—to your home if you have one. There's life in her body yet. She must not die."

The brawny man who stood in the boat had not ceased to stare at the thing which Gilbert had tenderly deposited in the bottom of his frail craft.

"It's best to let her die where she is, I think," he said at last, casting a look at Gilbert.

"Never, sir!"

"But you don't know who she is."

"I don't care if she is the portress of Hades!" snapped Gilbert, with indignation which fired every drop of his blood. "I will stand the consequences. Take us somewhere. I'll make you richer than you've been in a twelvemonth."

"But it's the wench, sir," the boatman growled.

Montjoy with a curse whipped out his rapier and held it at the man's breast.

"If she dies before you land us somewhere I'll spit you like a hare, and it will be the first blood on my legacy of steel."

The man's face lost every vestige of color, and the following moment he had picked up the oars and the boat was shooting across the dark and turbid water of the Thames.

This remarkable story will be continued in the next issue of the Ledger. During the coming months many great stories will appear in these columns. If you are not already a subscriber for this paper, it will repay you to send in a year's subscription. It costs you only $1.00, and you will never regret it. Let us hear from you at once.

* * *

I KNEW.

When first I dreamed your face,
  I knew by its strange sweetness,
  By law of life's completeness,
You waited, in some place.

When first our glances hot
  Did meet and mingle, yearning,
  I knew you were returning
To me from worlds forgot.

When first I felt your kiss,
    Its fire, its reckless rapture,
    Its thrill of primal capture,
I knew I lived for this!

* * *

Aladdin an Autoist.

"Now," it was explained to Aladdin, "this is a wonderful lamp. Rub it and a genie appears."

"I see little to that. What I want is a lamp that won't go out on my automobile and get me pinched by a traffic cop."

Red Wolf's Daughter

:-: Or, :-:

The Bush Exile

By William H. Manning

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CHAPTER VII.

THE RED WOLF'S THREAT.

"NEXT, peace!" The words followed swiftly on MacNeill's question, but not in the voice of any one who had previously taken part in the discussion. Joan Veitch stepped from cover and stood between the angry men. Lithe, easy and graceful, she occupied the center of the scene and shut off all remarks from others.

"Oh, you boys, you boys!" she added, like one shocked. "I never did see the like of you! Women are mild, angelic, and full of honey, but boys like you—well, I am ashamed for you, but 'tis the way of your sex. Men are dreadful creatures!"

Words came easily from Joan, and she was like an amiable philanthropist dealing with refractory children. MacNeill and Haugh stood silent, while Adolph stared blankly from where he lay prostrate. In a way she had mesmerized them all, but the Scot suspected that her manner was artificial. The White Whelp knew that it was. Nobody could storm more energetically than she, but now she was acting a peacemaker, and she intended to have her way.

"All animate creatures," she pursued, "were created for a special purpose. Woman, horse, ox, bear and wolf have long since found their proper places, but man gropes blindly and foolishly. Man thinks he was created to bite and tear. A terrible fellow, man is!"

She shook her finger reprovingly at the terrible fellows within reach of her voice.

"Fortunately," she went on, as placid as ever, "there is no real harm in man if he is rightly governed, especially if he has the government of present company. Of course, none of you meant anything serious, and you will be willing to drop further talk, and glad to meet as friends in the morning. Act so as to keep this affair from John Veitch. As for his daughter, her favor goes with the man of peace. Messieurs MacNeill and Haugh, I am your humble servant!"

She dropped them a courtesy and turned to the fallen coureur.

"Adolph, guid mon," she said, assuming broad Scotch, "ye mind the posies ye were telling me aboot a bit ago? Man-body, if ye love me ye will bring me a bunch the early morn sae I can wear them at table."

The Red Wolf's child could be as winsome as any when she willed, and she was doing her best now. Her hand was extended to the surly Chenier, and he mechanically accepted it and rose to his feet.

"You shall have the posies, mademoiselle," he mumbled.

"Thank you. I shall prize them dearly."

She turned to the other men.

"Now, all come away into the house," she added.

"I will obey in all things but the last," returned the White Whelp, calmly. "Being out on business, I must attend to it. Good night!"

He turned and walked away, showing no trace of vindictiveness, tho plainly untouched by Joan's amiability. There was nobody to explain that early knowledge of the fact that the girl was somewhere in the woods was what had kept him from trying to murder the Scot before she came. Adolph hesitated, but ended by slinking away after his master, as if he hoped to escape notice.

Joan looked more fully at MacNeill.

"And you?" she asked quietly.

"I am ready for the fort," he replied evenly. "May I escort you home?"

"Escorts are for women with white hands and wasp waists," she said, laughing. "I will go with you as a comrade."

She set the example and they started. Her flow of language proved to be as easy as ever, and she talked well, choosing new topics. Her education in Montreal had given needful color to her natural intelligence, and tho she often spoke like a child of the woods, she was without the crudeness of the ignorant. Joan of the boundless life and high spirits never lacked for ideas, nor the faculty of expressing them well.

When near the gate she paused and turned more fully to her companion.

"Mr. MacNeill," she said, in a low tone, "I am not going to ask why that trouble occurred, and it is not necessary that I should know. Having seen you, I am sure you were in the right. But, sir—oh, sir! you won't quarrel again, will you?"

Her hand was laid softly on his arm, and she looked up into his face in her steady way.

"You are so different from the other men here," she continued. "Now, you will be good, won't you—to please me?"

MacNeill was a trifle staggered. The words, the tone, the look, the touch of the hand that was almost—perhaps wholly—a caress, disturbed him not a little. He had his ideas of what was in a woman's heart when she did all these things, and, for Joan's sake, he was troubled. Astonishing as it was, for he was wholly free from vanity, he believed that tender ideas lay back of this mood.

"Quarreling," he answered, as soon as he could command words, "is far from my taste. I am always happy to leave that man alone who will let me alone. That much I'll cheerfully promise."

"That is so good of you!" murmured Miss Joan. "Now, let us go in."

They entered, the gate closed behind them, they separated, and the Scot was soon in his private room.

The events of the night had not been to his liking. He had sought for light and failed to get it, and had come so perilously near to open rupture with the White Whelp that he was not sure how Haugh would see fit to meet him the following day. And he was still ignorant of the cause of that man's hostility.

Enee Barbeau sought him out the next morning. That crafty woodgoer had spied upon the plotters after the quarrel, and had seen their leader confer with Chenier and the brothers Gadbois, but failed to overhear much. Only one sentence was important, but Haugh had declared that MacNeill should fill his grave before the end of the week.

Disquieting as this was, the rover did not let it turn his thoughts from another matter. He was at Outland House to secure Elias Gilchrist's papers, and there was more need for prompt action than ever. Finding the two children he had vaguely suspected of being the thieves from the Red Wolf's house, he talked with them as craftily as possible, but utterly failed to get information. If they had purloined the packet precocious duplicity hid the fact.

A little later, as he and Joan stood in the square in conversation, Rotah Daignault and her daughter Julie came near them. It was their first meeting with her since her return, and the Scot thought they would gladly have avoided speech now had the encounter been less direct.

Joan had had a constant, cheerful smile for MacNeill, but her face suddenly hardened. She nodded to Rotah and then looked at her no more.

"Oh! How do you do, Julie?" she said to mademoiselle, with some stiffness.

"I am quite well, Miss Veitch," responded the girl. "I do not need to ask if you are. Your looks tell me."

"Indeed! Do they? I suppose that means I'm always talking. Quite a pleasant day, is it not?"

"Yes, Miss Veitch."

Rotah had walked on. Now Julie, after thus lingering like one against her will, followed more slowly.

MacNeill maintained a face of absolute calm, but he read between the lines. Clearly, Joan scorned Rotah and barely tolerated Julie, and the French ladies gave as little love as they received.

The Red Wolf's daughter looked after them with her chin elevated and her expression severe. The Scot hoped he was to learn something about the standing of the Daignaults at the post, but was too prudent to ask for confidences. Joan quickly recovered her composure, turning to him with a slow-growing smile as she reverted to a former subject.

"As I was saying, we were so much troubled, that winter, by the howling of wolves that we had to send men out at night to shoot them. The hunters made good hauls, but I think all the wolves are not yet dead."

She went no nearer than this to speaking of Rotah and Julie, but the final words were accompanied by a side-glance at their receding figures that was suggestive. It was to be seen that she did not approve of all of her father's guests.

Half an hour later, as he stood near the gate, he saw Veitch approaching. First view told him that something was wrong with that person, and when he arrived he fixed a scowling regard upon his companion.

"I've been robbed!" he announced abruptly. "Somebody has been in my room and stolen papers from my desk. Valuable papers! That man shall repent it to the day of his death!"

CHAPTER VIII.

DOOMED BY CIPHER.

THE Red Wolf's expression and words were surely alarming, but MacNeill faced him with outward coolness, knowing the importance of appearances. Fearing he had been betrayed by circumstances, he expected trouble.

"Robbed!" he repeated. "How is that?"

"Have you noticed a desk in my room?" Veitch asked.

"Yes."

"In that desk I had documents of value. They were wrapped and tied in a sheet of brown paper. A thief has taken them and left blank sheets in their place. It was done inside of a week."

"That is bad. Have you any clew to the thief?"

"Not yet. He left no sign. I have never locked my room, so anybody could have skulked in secretly and done it. I'll find him, tho."

"You say the papers were valuable?"

"Yes—to me."

The factor's passion abated a trifle and he looked hard at vacancy, seeming to see things not explained to his guest. Perhaps this gravity was due to the fact that he saw Marjorie Gilchrist floating away with the lost documents, but MacNeill's chief idea at that moment was that he was very lucky not to be suspected.

"Have you not misplaced them?" he asked.

"No, a thief has them. I'm going to learn who——"

The Red Wolf stopped, meditated and grew less downcast.

"I have it!" he cried. "You remember the man you fought with swords. I have finally studied out that he was Daignault, a trader with the Northwest Fur Company until he took to drink and lost his place. I have two of his family in this fort, his wife Rotah and his daughter Julie. Rotah is all right, but Julie is such an ill-favored miss that I keep her unwillingly. Both are here because I'm charitable."

"Why do you think Daignault took the documents?"

"Why did he sneak in here, where nobody wants him? And are not the papers gone? He came to steal, and he got them."

Veitch spoke without emphasis, and MacNeill suspected that he did not believe fully in his own theory, especially as, his first enthusiasm over, he appeared to be struggling with a dilemma.

"Where shall you look for him?"

"Look for him?" Veitch repeated, surveying his companion closely. "Well, really, I don't know. Confound Daignault! Perhaps—er!—oh! I'll find him without trouble. I have many men to go on the search when I order them out at it."

The factor fell into deep thought and forgot his guest, but, a little later, bestirred himself and went his way. He left MacNeill doubtful that he wanted to find Daignault, tho he was certainly very much upset by the loss of the documents.

The Scot now knew that the papers that meant so much to Elias Gilchrist were not in Veitch's possession, and, as their powers for mischief remained as great as ever, he was at a loss where to look for them. Unless the small girls were the thieves, whom was he to suspect?

He was sure that Daignault was innocent, and no visible effort was made to find that person. The factor did not again refer to his loss in MacNeill's presence, but the latter felt certain that he was not reconciled.

The next morning, when with Gilroy, MacNeill had a sudden idea. The clerk was a well-meaning man, and informed as to matters in the bush. Acting on the idea he placed the mysterious paper he had found at Kashaboiwe before his companion.

"Can you read that?" he asked.

Gilroy looked at the secret cipher, a peculiar expression coming to his face. He seemed to study, and then, singularly grave, turned his attention upon the Scot.

"I can't read it," he said, "tho I've heard of this cipher, and have seen another like this. Sir, you have my sympathy."

"Why so?"

"Don't you know this is the warning of the Dread Dozen?"

"No. Who are they?"

"No man but themselves knows. They are the hidden scourge of the fur-land, a band of mysterious, dangerous knaves. He who receives this paper is doomed by them, and as good as dead if they can accomplish their will. They usually do so. You are marked for death by them!"

"This interests me," replied MacNeill with his customary coolness. "Do these fellows do much business in their line?"

"I don't know how much. Men are found dead in the fur-land, with nothing to tell who disposed of them. How many of the tragedies are due to the Dread Dozen cannot be told, for we can't say how many receive this unreadable warning."

MacNeill had taken the paper back. He remembered the men who had attacked him at Kashaboiwe, and, knowing that Haugh, Gadbois and Chenier were his enemies, suspected that he could name some of the mystic band, if Gilroy could not. Frank speech was on his lips, but he recollected that the clerk might be too friendly with Thackley Haugh to make it safe, so he checked his inclination.

"Should you happen to see any of this secret band, pray say that my address is temporarily at this fort. I shall not run away from them."

It was said with deliberate coolness, and Gilroy looked at him critically, but just then the clerk was called away and the subject was dropped, tho the rover had more to think about than before. He fell to musing on his strange situation, past and present.

It was hard to realize that the pleasure-loving MacNeill of old Scotland, who had no cares, the MacNeill of Montreal, who had been robbed by Jamie Lovat—poor Jamie!—and the MacNeill of the bush were all the same man, but it was harder yet to credit that he was the person so warred against from the night at Kashaboiwe to the present time.

The White Whelp had met him, after their friction, as if nothing unpleasant had occurred, and he had reciprocated the mood, but danger went harnessed with mystery.

"I am the man!" he quoted, wonderingly. "But what man?"

During the next week MacNeill made himself at home, interesting himself in the affairs of the children, and wrestling, running races and boxing with the adults, but he did not win the hearts of all. The White Whelp, waiting for his time, was coldly polite, but the rover had not yet filled the grave promised for him. Chenier and Gadbois often scowled when near him, but prudently kept themselves in check. Ignoring everything uncomfortable, he, on his part, was careful not to give offense.

John Veitch was his old self, mixing boisterous good humor with blustering abuse for his men, but always a captious master. He blamed his followers for what they did and what they didn't do, and blamed them for their sicknesses, aches and pains, and often he received threatening glances from the abused ones, but presently his bearlike joviality soothed the hurts his tongue inflicted.

Next to the tempestuous manager Joan was the central figure. She did no work and supervised none, but she permeated the daily life at the fort, giving attention to all except those she disliked. Even the outcropping teeth of the juvenile and the outdropping teeth of the aged interested her, and so of all other things. Active life and sympathy had each its turn, so she brought good cheer to the bedside of the ill, and, five minutes later, was climbing trees with the small boys. This was Joan, the ever-active, exuberant, imperious maid of the post.

She gave MacNeill much of her time, and each instructed the other in the ways of sport and useful accomplishment, so that, really, there was mutual gain.

One day, as the rover walked by himself, he came upon her by accident. Veitch was able to satisfy his liking for cattle, tho obliged to keep them within safe bounds, and under watch except when housed, for wild beasts often prowled near. MacNeill, setting out to cross the large day-inclosure, found some of the domestic animals in a grove, and Joan was with them.

She was beside a placid cow, and as that humble friend chewed her cud the girl stood with an arm around her neck and talked to her.

"Yes, Spottle," were the words first heard by MacNeill, "you are among the greatest of this earth's benefactors. Some men write learned books and think they are philosophers when they are only silly, but you feed the hungry, nourish the sick, strengthen the well and generally cheer mankind. Blessed old Spottle!"

Joan caressed the sleek neck and Spottle talked with her eyes, but MacNeill walked into view with a face of proper gravity.

"You speak words of sense," he said approvingly.

"Sir," cried Joan, "you are laughing at me!"

"Not a bit of it. We owe much to our four-footed friends."

"And we never pay them back. Still, I'm glad you have understanding of their royal qualities. MacNeill, I am tired. Let us sit on yonder stone. Spottle thanks you, but she will stand."

The young people sat as suggested.

"You will see," pursued Joan, "that I have a bouquet of wild flowers. I will permit you to smell of them. They are the poems of the woods. Poems? How

I do hate book-poems! Silly trash! We of the woods give them no heed, for we have a better kind."

For the next half-hour the girl rattled on gayly, but finally grew more serious and thoughtful. Looking about her she waved a plump, brown hand.

"Rupert's Land!" she murmured softly. "Domain of grandeur, place of woods, waters, mountains, traps and furs, region of glory in lakes, streams, cliffs and towering treetops. What can equal it?"

"It is certainly grand," the rover agreed.

"Grand enough to stay in?" asked Joan, with an arch glance.

"Those who stay seem to find it all-sufficient."

"But yourself? Are you thinking of running away to a place where you can spend your money faster? Do you hear your great wealth calling you?"

"I can truthfully say that I do not hear it call."

"I am glad of that, so glad!" murmured Joan, with another meaning glance. "You have become part of our daily life. You have taught me how to use a sword, and I have taught you to paddle a canoe, to tell the track of the wolf from that of the bear and fox, and to distinguish the teal and pigeon from the wavy and mallard. We have boated much together, and I have instructed you how to breast a rapid, to swing a burden by a tump-line, to mend a canoe with watape, to take barouge from the gray willow, to prepare pemmican, rubeiboo and richot, and many other woodland things. Ah, those days, those days!"

Her voice dropped lower, becoming a gentle murmur, and her eyes were eloquent. She was Joan in a new mood. MacNeill, painfully uneasy, realized that he must say something to fill the pause.

"I have much to thank you for, and I'm deeply grateful——"

"Even the voiceless woods bid you stay in their mute language."

"To eat the bread of idleness?"

"Guests are always welcome at Outland House."

"Even hospitality has its limits."

"Not here, for you. Father Veitch likes you well, sir. If you try to go, he will bid you stay, and if you persist, perhaps he will keep you by force."

MacNeill's conscience smote him anew. He had seen the Red Wolf's good will, and was ashamed that he was there with underhand intentions.

"It is I who am in debt for pleasures received," he replied, "but all pleasures have to end some time."

"Not necessarily."

Joan spoke in a hushed voice, and, laying a hand on the rover's arm, she looked at him in a way almost plaintive and wholly tender.

"Why," she added, "should we throw away what gives us pleasure?"

There was a tremor of her voice, and MacNeill experienced a sinking feeling at his heart. The touch and the look gave him a severe shock. What did Joan mean?

CHAPTER IX.

A CLEW AT LAST.

THE bush exile was a man of unusual characteristics. He gave no one idle compliments, never indulging in extreme gallantry to the opposite sex. Homage from others was not desired, and nothing would worry him more than to know that a woman had bestowed affection upon him that he could not return. Joan's words and glances of the past had not been forgotten, but he now found a worrisome condition growing more uncomfortable.

"Happiness," he answered, with some embarrassment, "is not a thing of metes and bounds, nor do all find it in the same places. A good deal depends upon how the individual was bred."

"You were city bred, yet you admire the fur-land," Joan reminded.

"That is true," MacNeill admitted.

"I was in Montreal parts of three years. Ah, me! I want no more of it. Give me the woods, wide, boundless and free, and I am content. You—have you not liked to boat on the waters and roam the forest ways?"

"Most certainly."

"Have these not been happy days?"

She leaned toward the Scot as she spoke, and her voice fell to a whisper. He stole a glance at her face. The old buoyant, careless, happy-go-lucky expression was gone from it. More womanly and softer and tender were the face and manner of the Northland girl. Unwilling to cause her a moment's distress, he was desperate. What was to be done?

"John Veitch and his daughter have done all that was possible to make me welcome," he said awkwardly. "Yes, and happy."

"They have only just begun, sir."

MacNeill removed his hat and wiped an overheated brow. He did not want the Red Wolf's daughter to talk in this vein, nor to look at him as if her heart was in her gaze, and yet he shrank from wounding her. Sorely beset, he longed for something to interrupt this scene, and for once fate was kindly.

John Veitch came striding along like a giant of the woods.

"Ho!" he cried cheerfully, "so you two are here? Just in time to go with me to see about that beaver-dam on Happy River. Is it all aboard?"

The rover started quickly to his feet.

"We are with you, factor!" he exclaimed.

Joan, too, had risen. She pressed MacNeill's arm suggestively, but cast off her former manner promptly. Becoming her her old self she added her voice without signs of resentment.

"Of course we will go, Father Veitch. We thirst for novelty, don't we, Mr. MacNeill? Veitch of Outland House, lead on to the battlefield!

"Humph!" retorted the Red Wolf, in great good humor. "Like all other soldiers, when bullets fly at the front, you want somebody else to lead."

"Being Veitch's daughter. Blood will tell."

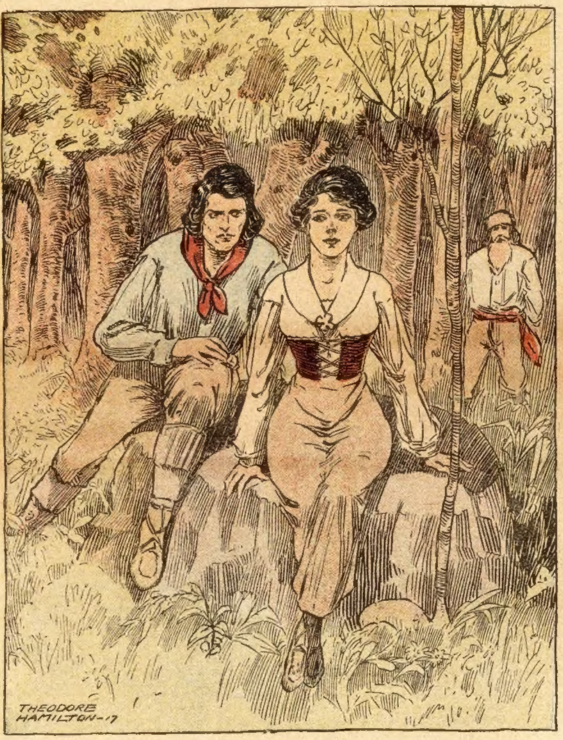
"Some blood degenerates in later generations."

"And some improves."

"Some can't be improved."

"Mr. MacNeill," cried Joan, "did you ever? Mark the vanity of John Veitch! He sets a bad example for us babes."

Father and daughter were in high spirits, and they exchanged badinage with ready tongues and kindly eyes as accompaniment. Again the rover mentally thanked his host for the coming, and the cloud was gone for that occasion. Joan paused only to hug Spottle again, and then the three went to the boats and the trip to Happy River was duly made. It was interesting, tho not important.



MacNeill realized he must say something.

After the return MacNeill's thoughts went back to the interview with Joan. Free from self-conceit tho he was, he could interpret her manner in only one way. Her look, her voice, her words and the touch of her hand—even a dumb rock could not fail to understand. More than once, previously, he had wished he had never seen Outland House, and the wish was with him now. Then he remembered Fort Lanark, and a father there who was a better man than John Veitch, and a daughter who was certainly as good as Joan—much better, in his opinion. His heart hardened. Gilchrist's papers must be recovered from the thief.

But matrimony—that was another matter. Before entering Rupert's Land he had believed himself proof against tender feelings, but Marjorie Gilchrist had stirred unsuspected depths within him. His heart told him to seek her for a life partner, but his empty pocketbook bade him refrain.

Now, here was Joan of the rich red hair and the rich red heart—Joan, the oft-imperious, nimble-tempered yet sympathetic girl of Outland House. She was a rare comrade, but did not move him beyond friendship. She was not to be thought of seriously.

"What she can see in me I can't comprehend!" he murmured discontentedly.

A near footstep caused him to drop the subject. Night was falling. A dim moon hung in space, and the buildings cast shadows that lay like peaceful sleepers. But the footstep fell—Enee Barbeau was there.

"Master," said the coureur, "I don't know what it means, but Elias Gilchrist's name has been mentioned. Ask no questions, but follow me quickly. Something is likely to happen. Come!"

Enee was composed. He was never otherwise, for his mental equipment was firm and free from nervousness. MacNeill watched his face while he spoke and rested content with that. A word from Enee was equal to a long explanation from a lesser man.

"Lead on!" the rover directed.

Enee led. They approached one of the houses at a point toward which MacNeill had often directed his eyes and his thoughts in the past, knowing that the room was occupied by Rotah Daignault and her daughter. The bushranger went near the wall of the house and, with a gesture, bade his companion be silent. MacNeill heard voices within, and they were contentious. Words drifted clearly to the listeners.

"There is no reason why we should talk about this any further," was declared, and the tones were those of Madam Daignault.

"Exactly what I think," came in Julie's voice.

"Then you will do what I wish?"

"Most certainly, I will not!"

"Julie, this is unbearable! We are guests of John Veitch, and it is criminal for you to act so. Have you no gratitude?"

"Gratitude—to him!" scoffed the girl.

"Consider what you have done. You took those papers from his desk——"

"How did they get there?" flashed the younger speaker.

"That makes no difference. You betrayed his hospitality when you took them, and I demand that he have them back."

"They were never his by right. You know they belong to Elias Gilchrist, and to him only."

"You drive me frantic! But why do I talk to a perverse child like you? I will myself carry them to Veitch."

"You will have to find them, first!" cried Julie.

"I have found them!" declared Rotah. "You thought you had hidden them cunningly, but my wits are as good as yours. I have them, myself, and in a place unknown to you. I shall take them to Veitch."

"And help him to marry Marjorie?" scornfully asked the girl.

"I trust in his gratitude——"

"And you are a married woman! Gratitude! Bah!"

"It is not for you to guess at what he will do," replied Rotah, stubbornly. "Once Veitch has those papers, he will soon be chief factor in place of Gilchrist. He will bend or break that proud man at Fort Lanark!"

"That man at Fort Lanark will help my father if he gets the papers, and he shall have them."

"Not so! I'll take them to our host at once."

Hurried steps sounded. MacNeill ventured to look in at the window. He saw Rotah run into the next room with Julie close after her. Both were still greatly excited, and each cried out that the other did not know where to find the documents. Yet, it was certain that one would secure them quickly. The rover turned to Enee Barbeau.

"Bushranger," he said coolly, "are you ready to leave Outland House?"

"Yes," was the brief reply.

"We go this hour. That for which we came is close to our hands. We will have it and take to the wilderness. Prepare to go."

"I am already prepared, and you know I have always kept pemmican hidden in the hollow tree for such an emergency. All is ready!"

"Then I'll get those documents by peace or force at once and——"

The outer door of the house opened. Rotah and Julie emerged almost side by side. One ran east and the other in the opposite direction. Neither carried a visible object, but one had surely succeeded. MacNeill stood irresolute.

Which of the two had the all-important parcel?

This strange story will be continued in the next issue of the Ledger. During the coming months many great stories will appear in these columns. If you are not already a subscriber for this paper, it will repay you to send in a year's subscription. It costs you only $1.00, and you will never regret it. Let us hear from you at once.

* * *

THE ENCHANTED SHEEP FOLD.

The hills far off were blue, blue,
  The hills at hand were brown;
And all the herd bells called to me
  As I came by the down.

The briars turned to roses—roses;
  Ever we stayed to pull
A white little rose, and a red little rose,
  And a lock of silver wool.

Nobody heeded—none, none;
  And then true love came by,
They thought him naught but the shepherd boy;
  Nobody knew but I!

The trees were feathered like birds, birds;
  Birds were in every tree,
Yet nobody heeded, nobody heard,
  Nobody knew save me.

And he is fairer that all—all;
  How could a heart go wrong?
For his eyes I knew, and his knew mine,
  Like an old, old song!

* * *

Silver Threads.

"If you have the blues," advised Berry, "go to the show. Take in the vaudeville. That will cure the blues. Hear the gay music, watch the festive dancers. Before you know it you will be tapping your foot to keep time with the music and applauding vigorously. Your blood will get into circulation and the blues will fly away."

"No," answered Funk, sadly, "that won't help a bit in my case. I have tried that. Whenever I go to the show to revive my drooping spirits they always bring on the saddest things they have. 'Silver Threads Among the Gold' is sure to be on the bill of fare wherever I go, and not once, but three times. It is terrible.

"They develop that theme assiduously, with soft green lights and every art they know. They can make it awful. First, a fellow will sing it, and then I console myself thinking that now with this over there will be something cheerful.

"In the next act a fellow brings out some sleigh bells and I get ready for 'Jingle, Bells, Jingle All the Way.' But do I get it? No. It's 'Darling, I Am Growing Old!' again. And it is just as bad on bells as on anything else.

"But I hang on to my seat. I have seen on the billboards in the lobby a picture of a man playing an enormous horn, a ridiculously enormous bass horn, and I figure on the turn's being funny. He comes out and plays a fast tune and gets away with it in great shape and then he plays another fast one and makes another hit. All is going nicely when all of a sudden he makes a motion as if to say, 'I will now do something worth while. No frivolous stuff now. See how wonderfully sad I can be!' And what does he do? Out of that bass horn of the massive Krupp type, fit only to blast the roof off the house with basso profoundo and fortissimo merriment, comes 'Silver Threads Among the Gold.'

"As he commits this outrage there are accompanying pictures showing the man and the silver locks, so as to make sure that every awful detail of that wonderfully sad effusion has a chance to sink into a person.

"So you see what I get at shows when I want something cheerful. And that is not all, either. Perhaps there is a playlet. If there is one it is not a funny playlet. Far from it. The sweet old man is turned out of the house by his cold, cruel daughter, and as he staggers his heartbroken way over the snow and ice and finally dies in a corner what does the orchestra play?"

" 'John Brown's Body,' I suppose," answered Berry.

"No. They wail out 'Silver Threads Among the Gold.' Then I reach for my hat—a thing I should have done in the first place."

HER FINAL LIE

By E. W. Bateman

CAPTAIN BILL SANDLEY, of the Texas Rangers, back from a fruitless chase after bandits who had dipped across the border over night for beefsteak on the hoof, sat in his office at Mardo making out the required reports of the week.

"Twenty hours each day in the saddle is not too much for the Government," he grumbled to himself, "if some dern clerk didn't pester you by each mail about that two bits you spent for harness oil and forgot to enter."

It was not an auspicious time for visitors, but Fate and the Brownsville-Mexico Railroad were both wholly calloused to such delicacies. Working hand and hand, they deposited Miss Felice Gallant and her nephew, Wallie Gallant, at the little railroad station at Mardo even while the ranger captain was wrestling with harness oil and postage entries. The ever-ready agent of the Western railroad station answered her beck.

"Could you tell me, my good man," the latest arrival began, "where I might find the mayor or the commercial club secretary?"

"Ma'am, you shorely musta got out at the wrong station," said that worthy, sympathetically. "We don't number none of them institutions you just named among those present in Mardo."

"Haw!" said Wallie, whose sport shirt, monocle, wrist watch and leathern puttees the agent eyed with deep distrust. "Fawncy, now, a village without a mayor, auntie!"

"Hush, Wallie, with your jests," the aunt replied. "You must remember, we are in the West now, and the customs of the natives are somewhat different. Perhaps you can point us to some one in authority," she suggested.

The station agent could and did, and Captain Bill viewed with some alarm the approach of the two to his office, which faced the plaza of the little border town and in plain view of the railway station. He saw at the first glance an elderly woman of the severe New England pattern, followed by a youth of about 22, who was laboring strenuously with two suitcases across the deep sand of the square. The ranger was fascinated with the type, the like of which he had not seen even on his infrequent trips to Austin. Wallie Gallant ran to leanness to a degree pitiful, he had a shock of hair which fell straight down in front, and his cigarette had the same longitude as the forelock. His clothes were as English as his accent. The pair, panting from the walk thru the plaza sand, faced the ranger for a moment without speaking. "Mebbe they're set back by th' local color," thought he, feeling the red creeping up the back of his neck. "I'll open this tender passage."

"Ma'am," he said aloud, "what can I do for you?"

Miss Felice had her second wind. "My good man," she began, "I wish for you to direct me to a place where my nephew and myself can obtain lodging for a couple of weeks. Then I shall expect the police or the local constabulary, of which I understand you are the head, to furnish me a guide and escort while I study the native Mexicans, who live, I believe, in great numbers just across the border. You see," she continued, "I belong to the Society of Research and Aid to the Semi-Barbarous Races. It was the wish of the society that I spend a few days somewhere on the border, that I might be thoroly familiar with the type and write a tract upon the home life and finer instincts of the Mexican."

Captain Bill swallowed hard. He had been studying for thirty-five years trying to understand this home life and to find these finer instincts. He had grown gray at it, yet knew he was but a novice in the intricacies of the Mexican mind.

"I ain't right certain, ma'am, you can absorb all the knowledge you hanker for in two weeks," he ventured. "The Mexicans are right deceivin' at times."

"Ah! The poor Mexican!" sighed Miss Felice. "We of the society have heard that he is much misused on the border by the whites." She eyed the ranger's war-worn rifle in the corner with deep significance. The owner squirmed.

"The mind of the Mexican," the lady continued, "is like that of all semi-savage people—misunderstood because of its simplicity. We are going to explain this fully, and then we believe all of the border troubles will be over."

Captain Bill swallowed hard again, as tho his Adam's apple choked him. But he held his peace and escorted the pair to Mrs. Johnny Williams' boarding-house, where he made due recommendations for them. Several times on the way over the ranger seemed about to say something, but on each occasion he eyed the horn-rimmed spectacles of the stern invader and bit down hard on his navy plug. His only outburst came when the merry jester, Wallie, found breath enough to become inquisitive.

"I say, old fellow, can you tell a body where he can find a bit of sport, you know?" he began. "Deuced dull place, from the looks of things."

"My son, Mardo may seem like a little dull on the week days, but a Sunday morn draws nigh," the ranger answered, with doleful accent, but a twinkle in his eye. "We're 'bliged to have all the festivities on a Sunday, 'cause we're too darn busy on other days to bury all the dead. Yep, I figure if you stay 'round till Sunday, them leggins will come in right handy."

"Fancy, now!" said Wallie, mystified. "Need them, really?"

"Just a little custom of the boys," said Captain Bill, apologetically, "to make all utter strangers feel at home. They'll all fire a round from their six-guns right between your legs, just to make it pleasant and homelike. Them leggins'll help the wild shots find your legs first."

And the grizzled ranger strode off, leaving the visitor a delicate color of seasick green.

* * * * * * *

Captain Bill Sandley made no wagers on the subject, but he knew in his own heart that Miss Felice Felton was going to encounter Donna Omaleagon on her first trip across the border, which he made safe for her by a note to the village jefe.

Of all the women who came over to the dance halls of Mardo on fete days Donna, young and lithe as the panthers of her native Tamaulipas, with a face like the Madonna in dull ivory and a heart like a border vulture, brought more gunplay and caused more fists to fly than all the others together. She was the greatest problem the old ranger met periodically, because she combined the unusual in the Mexican woman—youth, beauty and experience. That she wore her heart on her sleeve for the golden arrows of the Tribe of Mammon took nothing away from it. She could drink "blue mescal" until a regiment of men fell in their tracks trying to follow her, and then dance half the night. She could use a knife, too, tho she loved a quiet prey.

"It was bound to come," he told himself, after Miss Felice had gushed for a half-hour the next morning over the wonderful young girl she had found and what she hoped to do with her. "Anyway, that Donna is a typical Mex. all right. She's half-Indian and half-drunk all the time, and that's a perfect product."

But he knew the things Donna told Miss Gallant had been taught her in the mission schools—lore which her mind had held for the stamp upon memory but for a fleeting moment.

For a week or more he watched quietly, as Donna came across the line and spent each morning with Miss Gallant.

"She is furnishing the material for a wonderful tract," the latter told him once. "There seems nothing about the native life she doesn't know."

It didn't occur to the ranger to laugh at the irony of the remark until he was crawling into his bunk for the night.

* * * * * * *

Donna was dancing at the Fete of Roses. Reveille's Bar and Dance Hall was blazing with a hundred tin wall lamps, and the tinsel and flowers strung from wall to wall seemed to sway with the grace of her as she swept along in the dreamy waltz motion and the little step she had improvised.

"Isn't she ripping?" cried Wallie Gallant, loose-lipped with drink, as he sat at a table with the ranger captain and sipped the fiery mescal served him. "I say, there isn't a girl on Broadway wouldn't give an eye to dance like that," and he pattered loudly into the applause, so uproariously, in fact, that the dancer swept past the intervening tables and dropped into a seat beside him, with a smile for him that made the old ranger himself a bit envious.

"Ah, Senor Wallie, you like the dancing," she cooed in her best mission English. "It is so poor. The fine ladies—the Americanos—surely they dance the better."

"By Jove, not at all!" cried the other. "Do have a drink with us." His loud rapping on the table brought a Mexican waiting lad flying.

It brought, also, a dozen glances of envious hate from the group of admirers she had deserted. Only the steady eyes of the ranger captain across the table from them turned their stares away, while, unnoticing, the youth sat and sipped mescal, babbling on, and the woman sat opposite and smiled and smiled. She had not watched him unknowingly during those mornings.

"If I had one prayer right now," the ranger said to himself, "it would be that the devil keep Miguel Vasquez away from Reveille's."

"Really, you know, I would like to take you away with me to New York," Wallie was saying. "It would be great, and you would make a hit, I'm sure."

"And I, senor!" she whispered to him, her eyes aglow. "Nothing would please me more. But no, little Donna could not go so far away, lest she had friends there.",

"I'll be around the East," answered the youth. "I'll see you thru, in great style.

Captain Bill felt the room grow deadly still, and unconsciously he dropped his hand to his belt-straps. The eyes of the men at the bar were glued on the door, and they seemed to shrink as they stood. The girl in front of him paled to the roots of her hair.

"Miguel!" she whispered, staring as did the others.

Wallie Gallant, sensing not at all the meaning of the scene, smiled vacantly. Only the ranger sat as he had. His eyes were on a mirror in the bar, where he could see, crouched in the doorway, a Mexican vaquero, gun-ready, and with the venom of race hate in his eyes. Bill Sandley knew Miguel. He had known both him and Donna since they became visitors to the border.

The room waited a breath for tragedy.

Swifter than a snake striking, Sandley whipped out his gun and pointed it across the table toward the cowering woman's heart.

"If you love this woman, Vasquez," he said, his voice quiet, but ominously so, "do not raise your gun. I'll kill her before you can shoot."

Slowly, as the ranger watched the mirror, the Mexican's face changed from the killer to the lover. He knew Bill Sandley as the latter knew him.

"Go out of that door, Vasquez, as you came," the ranger continued, not changing his tone. "You're not wanted on this side of the line, either. I'll follow you thru the door—with the woman between us."

As slowly as he had submitted to mastering did the Mexican go. In a moment, as if wafted out by the relieved sighs of those inside, the ranger and the woman followed.

"If this is your woman, hombre," Captain Bill said in Spanish, "you may take her with you."

Miguel mounted a horse, watching the ranger, like a great cat, for some unwary move.

"I will not go, el capitan," the woman answered, with a sneer. "I am thru with—that." She turned and glided swiftly back into Reveille's.

In the dull light Sandley could see the chagrin and rage on the face of her erstwhile lover. He seemed to have forgotten the ranger. Then he turned and rode away into the night without a backward glance.

Bill Sandley returned to Reveille's. Wallie Gallant was dancing with Donna, and the crowd was shouting. He felt weary, suddenly, as he thought of the sudden death which had walked in and out, and which none of them remembered for a moment.

"Reveille, why did the girl do Miguel so dirty a trick?" he asked the man back of the bar. "He's given her everything he's had for years, and now——" He waved his hand at her.

The dance hall owner squinted his eyes. "A she-wolf doesn't bother with offal, el capitan," he answered, "when she's chasing open game."

* * * * * * *

Any sentimentalist will concede you one fact. There is no moonlight like that of Texas.

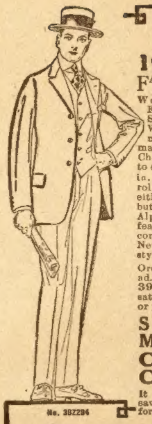
Wallie Gallant, just twelve hours away from his departure to the East, was walking with Donna Omaleagon. The desert, ghost-white in the magic light, simmered away from their gaze like a phantom sea. The ugliness of the cottonwood trees was hidden in their silvery tracery against the blue-black of the sky.

The woman was wonderful, tempting. Like all the Eves of history she fought

BEAUTY DOCTOR TELLS SECRET

Detroit Beauty Doctor Gives Simple Recipe to Darken Gray Hair and Make It Soft and Glossy.

Miss Alice Whitney, a well-known beauty doctor of Detroit, Mich., recently gave out the following statement: "Anyone can prepare a simple mixture at home, at very little cost, that will darken gray hair, and make it soft and glossy. To a half pint of water add 1 oz. of bay rum, a small box of Barbo Compound and ¼ oz. of glycerine. These ingredients can be bought at any drug store at very little cost. Apply to the hair twice a week until the desired shade is obtained. This will make a gray-haired person look twenty years younger. It is not sticky or greasy and does not rub off. ***



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for the thing she wanted with all her wiles.

"Ah, Senor Wallie," she sighed, "tell me of your wonderful country! I never tire of hearing—tho I shall never see it."

The youth told her of his world. It was one of wealth, of refinement, of exclusiveness. The eyes of the girl grew brighter with the telling. She wanted this above all things.

"You could go, my girl," Wallie was telling her, sagely. "They always want the lookers."

"Oh, of that, senor," she answered, with drooping head, "I weary. I want to be—just a woman. One of those of whom you tell."

She was lovely. He was foolish.

"By Jove, Donna!" he cried. "I believe you could. I would like to see you have a try at it."

Like a flash she took advantage of it. "Ah, senor, will you give it to me!" She was tremulous, passionate, holding both his hands. "Will you make little Donna your wife?"

It was a desperate move. The boy was aghast, and she took it for advantage. "Oh, will you, senor?" she breathed in his ear.

His answer was a heartless laugh. It had never occurred to him that this would be the outcome of his association with her. It was beyond his ken that she would even propose such a thing.

"Couldn't think of it, my dear," he said easily. "You're all right in your way, but it isn't done any more, you know. Besides, my aunt would never approve, and that settles it."

You may do many things more safely than laugh at a Mexican as he had done.

"You—you little lizard!" she cried, cursing him in Spanish because her tongue laid to the phrase more easily. She was drawn up to full height, her eyes blazing and breast heaving with rage. "You refuse me! Ah, but that is droll!" she laughed, while he looked at her in a puzzled way, wondering what she had said in her own tongue.

Neither had noticed a shadow which swept over the sand from the village toward them. Silently, swiftly it drew nearer, as the two eyed each other. It was the woman's primitive sense which warned her. She turned as a catlike body shot thru the air straight at the youth who stood before her.

"Miguel!" she screamed, and sprang to meet the shape. She fell beneath him, and screamed again—her death cry. The boy fled, crying out as he ran.

"Holy Mary, I have killed her!" swore the vaquero, kneeling by the girl. "Oh, my heart, why did you die to save a Gringo?"

The woman smiled, a sneer at death. "Go quickly, Miguel!" she gasped. "They will seek you." She clinched her teeth over a gush of blood. "I was—saving him—for my own knife!" she whispered.

Tenderly he laid her on the ground, kissed her once, and fled into the night.

There were those who met Wallie Gallant and turned him back with them.

"It was brave of her, too brave!" he was sobbing out. "She died to save my life."

They found her where Miguel had left her. She was clutching a bloody knife and spitting blood into the sand beneath the arm on which she pillowed her head.

"Ah, senors!" she cried to them, half-rising. There he stands, now, shivering, because of my blood. He killed me, senors, killed me with my own knife! He——" she sank to the sand, dead, her accusing eyes and bloody hand pointing to Wallie Gallant to the last.

* * * * * * *

Looks were black against the boy, who, white-faced and quaking in the moonlight, fainted as the woman shrilled the charge of murder in his ears.

A shot and another, then the roar of a big six-gun split the still night air.

"There's Bill Sandley's gun," said one of the men, quietly. "Let's wait for him. He always bobs up where there's trouble."

They sat in a ring around the boy and the dead girl, and the prediction came true. Across the desert the ranger strode, a woman with him. It was Miss Felice Gallant. She cried out and sprang to her nephew's side, brushing the sand from his face.

"Bill, we found the Omaleagon woman dyin'," the spokesman said. "She died with that knife in her hands, and her last breath accused the boy there," he pointed to Wallie.

"She died lyin', then, boys," answered the ranger. "I shot Miguel Vasquez thru the stomach in a runnin' fight as he was making for the south trail. He's up at Reveille's on a table, dyin' now. He told me he killed her, when she jumped in the way to save the boy."

* * *

Useful Ideas.

"You're just the chap I was looking for," exploded the garage owner to the man who came in for air. "Here is something I just got in this morning and I've been wondering how many of them you'll take. Put one on your car and——"

"Good night and good luck!" exclaimed the man who came in for air. "Don't show me anything that costs money. If you have any souvenirs——"

"Souvenirs? Why, this is the greatest boon to you Bigsicks drivers that ever came out. You attach it to your——"

"I'll attach nothing. I have everything attached now that it will hold. A sheriff's attachment is the next thing I'll be getting."

"All right, it's your loss. Bojack took one the minute he saw it and Swink bought one for himself and three for his brothers-in-law!"

"I thought so. It wasn't right for you to take Swink's money that way. I call it a dishonest deal. You know Swink's weakness for buying every auto attachment that comes out. You've sold him more junk for that whiz of his than to any other nineteen men that come into this garage. And still you're after him.

"Remember, sir, that Swink has a wife and child, and a man in your position shouldn't accept his money under the conditions. When he sees something new that you have to sell that can be bolted onto a car that is already overloaded you ought to take him aside and tell him he doesn't need the device. But you don't! You let him run home for his pocketbook and he comes back and wants a dozen.

"I'll admit that that convex-concave reflecting mirror you sold him was worth the money. When I saw his I bought one. I wouldn't be without it now. Attached to the windshield it gives me a view of everything behind me. If there happens to be a pretty girl in the machine running behind mine I can look into her eyes and see her smile and she never knows it. Also, if the folks in the tonneau of my own car are talking about me I can spot them instantly."

"Please let me explain this new improvement for Bigicksses," pleaded the garage man. "It's bottled mountain air for your tires. Mountain air is much lighter than any other and tires filled with it make your car weigh less and——"

"Gosh! That sounds plausible enough," said the man who came in for air. "Give me a few quarts of it. And I must tell Simpo about it."

* * *

Tortured Lover.

Vere de Vere Stackhouse wore a wrist watch and tucked his handkerchief inside his coat sleeve. His socks were scented with sachet and he was on speaking terms with a highly cultured manicurist who labored daily for the purpose of enhancing and preserving his beauty.

Furthermore, he wore evening dress always when he dined, and his pajamas were embroidered with what he described as "taste and discretion." To be exact, he was a swell dresser.

The Herculaneum room was almost deserted. Those who had dined early had gone to the theaters or the dancing clubs. It was at that time of the evening when a dozen waiters contend for the honor of serving one.

The orchestra in a half-hearted manner was playing a selection from "Carmen" and Vere de Vere Stackhouse had just inhaled a long draft from his ninth cigarette.

"Irma," he said, in tones that were fraught with agony, "I can stand it no longer.

"Try to bear up for just a little while," replied the beautiful girl who sat across the table from him. "You must, Vere de Vere, for my sake."

"But you do not know how I suffer."

"Yes, I do. I have suffered often as you are suffering. Ah, you see how much more patiently woman is able to withstand agony. I have suffered as you are suffering, and no one has been permitted to know. Try to be brave until I have finished my cheese."

With a supreme effort he suppressed a groan.

"Hurry, sweetheart, hurry!" he begged, when the waiter had brought his change and thanked him for his tip. "If you only knew what every moment means to me!" With a sigh of regret she got up, slipped into her rich robe, and they hurried to the taxi that was waiting for them. Then, when they were seated safely where no one might see, Vere de Vere Stackhouse unbuttoned his left shoe and slipped it half off, thus relieving his tortured toes.

"Now," he said, after he had indulged in a deep and soulful sigh, "let's talk some more about love."—Judge.

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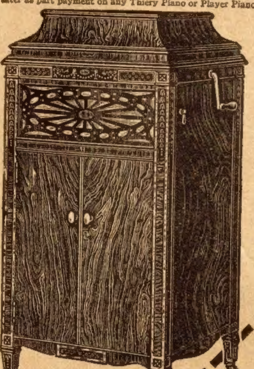

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COWBOY PERILS

Or, The Girl He Won

By Frederic Knowles

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CHAPTER XIV.
APPREHENSION.

HARPEL went back to the smoking lamps and the littered floor and the disordered chairs. George had departed with his violin; the piano stood deserted, with the marks of many fingers on the worn keys. Numerous cigarettes littered the big top, and in one place a cigar had scorched the marred varnish. Harpel had not thought of going to bed now. He dropped onto the old stool, and began playing softly, puffing absently meanwhile at a long-dead cigarette.

It was a curious melody in the Spanish style, and with little accented notes that reminded one of castanets. Harpel had heard it on the coast or somewhere, a good many years before, and hadn't thought of it for a long time. Only he remembered hearing the little schoolma'am say once that she liked Spanish music, and so he played it as if she were listening. As he played, the remembrance of where he had first heard it came back to him. It had been in San Diego. He remembered a big house among palm trees—a house with a red roof and wide porticos, and he had gone there, he and another boy. With the keys under his fingers, Harpel sensed the same delight he had felt upon coming from the hot daylight into the cool interior with its shadows about the deep-set windows. He had been very young then—Harpel laughed unpleasantly, and stopped playing.

"What's the trouble?"

Harpel swung around, half angry; he had imagined himself alone. Childs lounged in a chair behind him.

"Why don't you go on?' demanded that person. "Pretty tune; I'd like to hear it again."

Harpel shook his head.

"No," he said decidedly. "I won't play any more. It reminds me of things I ought to forget." He applied a match to the cigarette stub between his lips, but the dried paper burst, and he threw it down savagely. Childs, being wise, said nothing, but tossed his tobacco and papers to the other, and Harpel took them gratefully.

"Did you ever try to forget something and couldn't?" he asked presently, with his eyes on the floor.

"Lot uh times," returned Childs. "I reckon that's a common trait."

"Well, I have," said the tall cowboy, referring to his question. "I thought I had about forgotten some things that are better left that way, when it all comes back to me as tho it happened yesterday. It was a fool trick digging up this dress suit, for I dug up a lot of unpleasant things with it, and the worst of it is I can't put them away with the clothes. You know, Harry, my father was a thief?"

Childs, seeing a story, encouraged the other with his eyes.

"It doesn't seem to surprise you," said Harpel.

"I don't show surprise, son. I reckon your dad wasn't one of the family."

Fred smiled grimly and went on as tho the other had not spoken.

"Not an ordinary thief, but one of the kind that make the big steals. In some fashion or other, the bank he was connected with went to smash—and left my father with the most of the money, and he disappeared. I was too young to know anything about that, of course. I was with my mother; and we met him in the South, and we traveled. Harry, I saw the big bell at Moscow when I was seven. We lived almost everywhere. Three years later my mother was killed in a train wreck, and my father went to live in California.

"Of course, as the years went by, I got more or less suspicious about certain things, and at last came almost to certainty about them. I had been going about since I was a small child, and it had grown natural to me to be always moving. I went to college when I wasn't much more than a boy. Once away from my father, the whole thing seemed more and more crooked. He wouldn't allow me to write to him—afraid, you see. Well, finally, I asked him about it. He told me the truth. Three days afterward he died of heart failure, so the doctors said.

"After the funeral I got things straightened out as best I could. There was still considerable money left; very nearly as much as he had taken. You see, he had invested in a business in South America, and made a big thing out of it. Of course, I paid what was left to the people who had been swindled, and drifted. The world didn't look good to me any more; I didn't have the heart to ask people I knew for a position until I had squared things. I began to think I had a task that was more than I could meet successfully. Everything went wrong, somehow, and I gave up caring. That was about the time I landed here in this country. You know the rest. If this coal land is good, I see a light ahead."

"How much do you lack of payin' 'em off, son?" Childs' tone was not in the least prying.

"About fifteen thousand dollars, I guess. Do you think the land is worth it?"

"I reckon!" Childs was emphatic.

"You see, I paid some at times," Harpel explained. "Once I made a good prospect in the South and got ten thousand out of that, but I could not hope for such luck again. Perhaps if I had stayed with people I knew I might have come clear by this time, but the idea choked me somehow, and I didn't have the heart. I was always a proud cuss, I suppose. And then I couldn't hope to live like I had before, you know, and for a time that bothered me. I thought I'd rather get down among people who work with their hands and forget. Harry, you are the first man I ever told; not that I cared so much after the first excitement died away, but it made people curious—Alexander Harpel's son, you know, and all that. Seven years have not allowed me to forget entirely, altho it has taken the raw off."

"I understand," said Childs, slowly. "I knew you were different, Fred; that you hadn't been in the rough all your life, and I'm thinkin' you won't need to be here much longer if that coal holds out right. I reckon there is enough there to square you and somethin' for a starter besides."

"No," said Harpel, "it isn't that. I don't believe that luxury appeals to me much any more. To get even is all I ask. I don't want things presented to me; I want to work for what I get."

Having finished, he made another cigarette and smoked silently, in perfect understanding with the companion across the room. Having opened his heart, the other's bearing satisfied him completely, and he knew that here was a friend. Thru the window he saw a new day coming out of the east. The hills changed color slowly, and grew presently into their old familiar detail; ridges and ravines sprang out as if by magic under the touch of the glorious dawn. In the distance a coyote yapped faintly at his enemy, the sun. Overhead the lamps became yellow and futile in the clear white light of morning, and somewhere across the road a door slammed sharply, and after that the sound of faint footfalls. The corral gate rattled; there was much stamping, and a horse nickered clear, above the stillness. Harpel's face changed expression suddenly; the sound had brought something to his mind.

"Harry," he said, "what would be Grimes' idea in allowing Miss Parkman to ride that trick pony, Pedro?"

"Conceit, I reckon," said the other. "Grimes is that way."

"Oh," said Harpel, "perhaps that's it." But remembering something else, his mind was not easy.

CHAPTER XV.
A QUESTION.

CHILDS discarded his borrowed finery and came in about seven to discover Welden, Harpel, and the blear-eyed Cal putting things to rights.

"Need some help?" demanded the former, seating himself on a table.

Cal snorted. "Help!" he snarled, throwing a look from bloodshot eyes. "Just take a slant at this dump. I reckon if some of them merrymakers had to put in the next day like we have to, they would be a little more careful. I always think a dance is just the ticket till afterward. No more for me—I'm thru."

"Besides, that whisky will make you mean afterward," said Childs, winking at Welden. "Now, if Cal had been a drinkin' man he would feel meaner than ever. Look at the other boys and take a lesson, son."

Cal poured a pail of water onto the floor savagely.

"Resistin' the tendency to drink; callin' all night on a dry throat, and havin' to do most of the work the next day will get the best of 'most any one," went on Childs, absently. "You go take a rest, Brockway."

"I only wished I could," returned that individual, wearily.

"Well, you can. Gimme that bucket, and look out, boys. Here comes a fresh man."

"Mean it?" demanded Cal, straightening.

"Uh course. Run along to bed, and I'll help finish."

"That's real good of you, Harry," said the weary Brockway, handing over the bucket.

"Not at all. You see I spilled coffee on that pink tie uh yours last evenin' and kinda wanted to square things."

Childs chuckled, and awaited the sarcasm he felt certain the other would deliver before going. Brockway hesitated and opened his mouth, but sheer weariness seemed to master him completely, and he went out without replying.

With a fresh hand, things went better, and before George had called dinner, the ranch-house was itself once more. Welden voted for bed.

"Reckon I'm gettin' old," he said, "but I gotta have my sleep. You boys roll in, too?"

Childs shook his head.

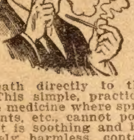
"No," he said, "I guess I'll take a little ride after dinner. A good road and an easy horse, and it's the best thing on earth to rest you. You wouldn't care to go along, Fred?"

"Why, yes," said Harpel, "I'll go. Was thinking of the same thing. I would have suggested it myself if the roads weren't so muddy."

"Not at all bad up the valley. The storm came too much the other way. I reckon it didn't much more than lay the dust above the forks."

And so they went about two o'clock, riding away thru the sunny afternoon with the ponies picking up their feet leisurely while their masters conversed of many things. Of what he had told Childs that morning Harpel made no further mention, and the short cowboy was far too wise to speak of it without bidding. Fred's confession had only confirmed several deep suspicions that Childs had held a long time. From the moment of their first acquaintance he had noted many things that showed Harpel had not always been one of his kind.

To be a good cowboy was no easy matter; and a certain percentage of brains must enter into the daily work.



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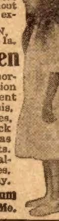
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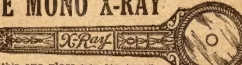
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Harpel's mistakes had ever been small ones, little things that the range-bred youth makes second nature. It was as tho, while his finer brain grasped almost instantly the important point, he continually fought himself to keep a grip on the lesser things, without which the other would have been useless. In other words, he had begun at the top without a knowledge of the bottom. With keenest interest Childs had watched the other gradually explore and make note of these nothings, an ignorance of which would have made him a failure. And he had finally won. Harpel might now ride with any without being conspicuous; that is to say, as one of them.

Childs sighed. It had been a world of horses for him ever since he could remember, and all things pertaining to such a life were a matter of course. He could do nothing else; and the things that made his vocation possible were going fast. The railroad was coming. Railroads spelled disaster for the big ranchman, because the settler was ever with the first train. Childs considered this mournfully. He was about to find himself in the position of the whale, who, having spent his life perfecting his swimming, suddenly finds that the ocean has gone dry.

He thought of Fred's offer, and knew he must not accept that. The other's story was still fresh in his mind to strengthen his resolution; Harpel would need all the property might hold for him. Towns would grow up along the valley, and Childs shuddered at the thought of living long enough to see the coming of the Italian and his truck garden. The town held no place for him. A new order of things was about to arrive, about which he had not been consulted. He was shoved ruthlessly downward, a victim of the elimination. Having been moved out, he must move on.

But he voiced no word of this fate that awaited him. Having recognized it, he ignored it till the time of its arrival. Instead, he spoke whimsically of a certain Swede he had known, who practiced indoor shooting with a shotgun, and from that the conversation turned to more serious things. Childs mentioned the rifle that had failed in Harpel's hands.

"I looked at it," he said, "and somebody had busted the head off the firin' pin, sure enough. You know Grimes had a chance at it on Thursday afternoon when no one was about. I reckon he figured on Freeman gettin' you, and wanted to make things as easy and foolproof as he could. I asked about Freeman in Bender City. He only arrived the night before we started for Piney Creek Basin. I reckon Grimes saw him somewhere early the next mornin' and lined things out to him. Mebbe Freeman was listenin' to us out there at the blacksmith shop when we talked. It is a certainty he was around there somewheres about then. However, I reckon it doesn't matter now."

Harpel mentioned the pistol presently, and told how he had given it to the little schoolma'am unobserved.

"What's the matter—things lookin' up?" asked Childs, casually.

"She's going riding with Grimes today," Harpel told him.

"Oh," said the short cowboy. "I didn't reckon she would do that."

"But she will. Harry, I would feel easier if it wasn't for the fact that she is going to ride that pony, Pedro. It doesn't seem right, somehow, and I wish she wasn't going."

"This thing has got on your nerves, Fred. I don't reckon Grimes will get mean. Probably it is only his pride."

"I wish I could think so," said Harpel, gloomily.

"Well, there's one thing that won't do, and that's go and ask Grimes about it," said Childs, decidedly.

Harpel caught his meaning.

"I thought of following them, all right," he said, "but they intended going to Big Butte, and they'd be sure to see me. You understand what the girl would think," he finished miserably.

"But a fellow might beat them up there, and size up things, anyway."

"It's too late for that now; I expect they are already on their way. Here are the forks. We can see if they have already passed."

They rode up and dismounted to read the story in the damp earth. There were many tracks headed one way; that would be the returning dancers. Where the road turned off to Big Butte and Rock Creek where the Bar 7 was, the prints were fewer and signs more plain.

"Here comes Grimes ridin' a big horse and leadin' a little one, the pony, I should say. And here he goes back again. There's the pony's track at the outside of the road. You see, he wasn't leadin' him then."

And so the final hope was destroyed that she had not gone. Harpel mounted wearily. As Childs straightened up from his examination, Fred saw that his face was grave under his big hat. His mind was made up in an instant. He addressed the other.

"Harry," he said, with his voice rather desperate, "I guess I'll drift along, anyway. I don't stand much show with her at best, and so I won't lose much but hope if she learns."

"I figured you'd come to it," said Childs, "and I can't say as I blame you. Everything you need?"

Harpel nodded.

"I suppose I was considering this all along," he said slowly. "I couldn't get rid of the thought that Grimes meant trouble, bringing that pony the way he did. What time do you think they went?" And he indicated the tracks.

Childs consulted his watch. "It's a quarter past four now," he said briefly. "The trees there put this spot in shade about three, and the tracks are cooked dry. I reckon they were gone an hour before that. You are anyway two hours behind them. But then, they wouldn't ride fast."

"No," agreed Harpel, and turned his horse.

"You might meet 'em anywhere," said Childs. "They might be back any time now."

"We can only hope for that," returned Harpel, and the fragments of a conversation returned to his mind: "——never suspect——trick horse——clever." He swung into the Rock Creek road.

"Good-by, and good luck!" Childs called after him, and watched him ride away out of sight among the yellow quaking aspens.

"He wouldn't 'a' let me go along," he said almost wistfully. "The poor kid—he's got it bad. And on account of him bein' worried, there was somethin' I didn't tell him. Why did Grimes turn all his boys loose for Bender City last evenin', do you reckon?"

He drew on a bridle rein until his pony's head turned around almost facing him. He looked the astonished animal in the eye savagely.

"You think you're some weight in this world, don't you?" he remarked, with a frown. "Well, I reckon you are goin' to prove it before evenin'. If you had sense, you'd see things was dead wrong, too."

CHAPTER XVI.

AN ANSWER.

JULIA PARKMAN'S first thought on awakening at ten had been that she would not go riding that day. She feared Grimes, and even went so far as to admit it to herself. It seemed at the moment that he had been almost too insistent the previous evening; almost as tho he had commanded her. She dressed languidly.

Mrs. Williams greeted her with a sleepy yawn, and the old ranchman himself went so very near asleep at the belated breakfast that he spilled his coffee and so became a target for his wife's irritation. Williams endured the tirade with the stoicism of long suffering, and escaped at the first opportunity. Young Tom, sullen because he had been neglected at the dance, and exceedingly tired and ill-natured, gave some very frank opinions on numerous subjects, and swore at every provocation. His mother, immediately upon the old ranchman's departure, began on the son, who returned volley for volley until he was master of the situation and Mrs. Williams had fled to the kitchen. Pleased with the victory, Tom turned his attention to the little schoolma'am, and became once more sullen when she left, also.

Afterward she tried to read, but Tom's wrangling in the kitchen with his mother came all too plainly thru the thin partition, and she escaped to the outer air. The boy, ever observant, noticed immediately, and came, too. She could not avoid him, and at the end of a very one-sided conversation, had reached a conclusion: Another dance, and the Williams family would be impossible. Anything was better than the long day enlivened only by the intervals of uninteresting battle. She looked forward to the coming of Grimes with something very near bordering on pleasant expectancy.

Leading the little pinto pony, Pedro, as he had promised, Grimes rode up about one, as clear-eyed and immaculate as tho his rest had been undisturbed and of long duration. Grimes had not slept an instant. He was one of those iron individuals who can apparently dismiss fatigue at will and appear jaunty after any ordeal. The girl was waiting on the steps. He spoke to her as he dis-

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mounted, and immediately grasped the pony's bridle and led him forward.

"Miss Parkman, meet Pedro."

The pony lowered his head and gravely held out a little hoof. The girl was delighted. "Pedro," she cried, "you little dear! Why, he is just as you said, Mr. Grimes."

"Did I not tell you?" he reproached. "And he travels beautifully, as you shall soon see for yourself. I would suggest that if we are to see the valley from the Big Butte we should go immediately."

"I am ready," said Miss Parkman, and had mounted before he could aid her.

They turned out at the gate, and Grimes whirled his big black in to close it after them, but not with quite the same ease with which Fred Harpel had done the trick many times in the past, she thought, as he spurred up beside her.

"I was afraid," he said, as he brought the black down to the pony's stride, "that you had perhaps changed your mind about our ride, and that the fatigue of a dance at the Double Y had made even Pedro's charms tame."

"No, I was glad to see you coming. Tom is almost impossible this morning, Mr. Grimes. The prospect of a ride is very diverting. Pedro is certainly a dear!"

Grimes smiled. "And his master?" he asked, and saw that he had made a mistake. "Excuse me," he added, instantly. "I should have said 'mistress.' He is yours, Miss Parkman."

Astonishment was on the girl's face as she glanced at him.

"You are joking, Mr. Grimes?"

"I do not joke with you, Miss Parkman."

"You really meant him for me?"

"Assuredly."

"But, I cannot accept."

It was his turn to show surprise.

"Why?"

"That is obvious. You know that I cannot, but I thank you for offering him."

Grimes glanced at her keenly and said nothing more about the matter, and she liked him better for it. Instead, he turned the conversation to other things, and began telling her directly without any introduction of the old trading post that had stood at the forks in days past, and of the strange characters who had visited it. He was a fascinating talker when he tried, and that afternoon he put his whole soul into his speech. The girl listened, interested in spite of herself, and wondered dimly if this were the man of whom she had warned Harpel. He seemed so different, somehow, in this mood. For a moment she believed that her fears and a certain conversation she had overheard must have been a dream, a grim something without reality.

"There was one incident," Grimes was saying, "that happened a long time ago when I was very young; but I have never forgotten it. It was when there were still a great many Indians about here, and when they still were only savages with an exceedingly thin coat of veneer. One summer about twenty lodges camped just below the trading post. A young white named Lee fell in love with the chief's daughter, who was a famous beauty among the redskins, and really pretty from our standpoint. But the old chief wouldn't listen to Lee's appeal, and ordered him from camp. A young buck from the lower country was going to give the father fifty ponies for the girl, and of course the highest bidder got her. Lee had nothing but his brains to aid him. He hung around for a day or two after his dismissal by the old chief, and then disappeared. We thought he had given it up as a bad job, and we forgot all but the girl who went about sorrowful.

"But Lee hadn't. One day he came riding in with fifty ponies, all good ones, and demanded the daughter. The old chief demurred, thinking he might get a raise from the other fellow, but Lee talked strong and won. That night he and the girl left, and none too soon, for the disappointed rival came racing in, looking for his lost stock. The old chief refused to turn it over until his daughter was brought back, and that was impossible, for Lee had gone, leaving no trace. The old Indian had got the ponies, and the white had the girl; nobody was disappointed but the young buck who had lost both. Everybody thought it was a good joke, and I doubt if they would have prosecuted Lee if he had been caught." Grimes laughed at the remembrance.

"But it wasn't fair to the young Indian," protested the little schoolma'am.

"Neither was the old chief fair to Lee, who could not hope to compete with his rival for the girl," returned Grimes. "Some one had to lose, any way luck had it. Don't you see? I believe that sort of thing, Miss Parkman."

"But it was not right," she protested. "Lee was a thief."

"That is true."

"Well, then," she cried triumphantly, "you must be wrong."

"Not at all. For every great happiness there must be a great sorrow. This is always true. Every time you gain some one else has lost. And yet you will not say it is a crime to be happy. Lee gained only happiness. It seems to me one has a right to happiness at whatever cost to others. It is something to be striven for; some one must lose. You do not agree with me?"

"I do not," she said evenly. "The world would not stand long on such a basis as that. If this earth were full of such men as Lee, you would speedily change your mind. Sir, can you think the general trend of the world has been wrong for so many years?"

"Honesty is artificial," he told her. "It is merely something cultivated to fulfill the need of a growing civilization, because civilization cannot do without it. It is essential, and therefore we have it."

"Then why are you honest?" she asked directly.

Grimes weighed his answer and delivered it immediately.

"Miss Parkman, I am not. I believe Lee did right."

She laughed. "I see you believe honesty is not a matter for definition," she said slowly. "Let us talk of something else—or rather, not at all, except that I would like you to point out places to me."

"As you say," he told her. "We leave the road here. By taking the ridge we can ride to the top of the Big Butte. It is a hard climb, but I fancy we will feel repaid. We can come down the other side, and so into the road below the Bar 7. There will be time enough."

They trotted into the cottonwoods below the road, and splashed thru the shallow water among the gray bowlders, and out onto the hillside beyond, and so came to the crest of the ridge winding up before them. The pony, Pedro, climbed well, and the big black kept pace thru the miles, and the sun swung steadily lower. At the beginning the pinnacle of rock that was the goal had seemed beautiful. Perpendicular on three sides, with the mountain extending out to it at the rear, distance had given it the effect of smoothness. One could conceive no irregularity in that mighty face of granite; trees could find no foothold on its polished sides. Ledges were a myth that existed only as the result of projections that were not there. So it had seemed to Miss Parkman from the first ridge.

But under the shadow of this convulsive effort in stone all was changed. The former resemblance was lost; the picture had become a grim reality. A sense of beauty had given way to a sense that very closely resembled fear. It is so with nature. Her detail which is terrible is fashioned into a result which is beautiful. Combined with her greatest ally, distance, she achieves this. Grimes and the girl paused below the last hard climb.

"It is wonderful," she said, and then added after a moment: "But we shall be dreadfully late getting back. Shall we go on?"

Grimes smiled.

"We came so slowly," he explained. "Once we are down the other side we can race home. Of course, if——" He hesitated and glanced at her with a question on his face.

"No," she said, "I hate to give up when we are so near. Come."

A sudden change came over the man's face, and was gone as quickly as it had come, but one watching his eyes would have sworn that he had smiled.

They picked their way up carefully among great bowlders and fallen trees along the ghost of a path among the kinnikinic vines. Mighty fragments of rock hung over them, and broken particles ten feet high made many detours necessary. The sun was low to the west, and this side of the cliff was in deep shadow. The evening destroyed all bright colors and threw the whole slope into a monotone of purple, with faint, tawny lights. It would have seemed almost night but for the sky. Below, the pines showed blue-black, and above, they threw dark tracings against the heavens. The girl shivered slightly.

"We should not have come," she said, without turning her head.

Grimes did not reply, and they went on in silence. A last low ridge of granite, with a narrow way thru it; a final clump of pines hugging the cliff, and they came out to the tiny plateau on the crest. Grimes dismounted.

"Will you get down," he suggested, "and come over to see how the world is made?"

They paused on the very brink. Below the rock fell away sheer a thousand feet to the valley below and the tiny trees, with the thread of the river running thru them. Beyond that the narrow line she knew was the road by which they had come. And then, stretching away an immeasurable distance to the sky, lay a chaos of rises and hollows and long slopes with rocky crests and steep hillsides with the distant blue of trees on them, and here and there carefully traced waterways showing faint lines of bright-hued quaking aspens. And finally against the heavens lay the mountains themselves, their lines softened into beauty by that greatest of deceivers, distance. Proud peaks with their burden of everlasting snow, and lesser ones without any regularity of outline, in a majestic line across the miles, with over all that indefinable spell which characterizes the magnificent in nature, and belongs to it alone.

How long the girl stood watching, she did not know, but when she finally turned the man's eyes were on her.

"How do you like it?" he asked.

"I can't express it, but it would be a

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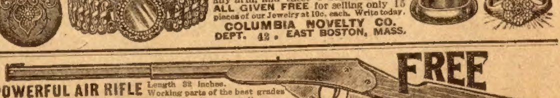

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good lesson for the egotist. 'And you?'"

"I had not noticed," he told her suddenly. "Instead, I was thinking how much easier it would be to take one step forward than to go on living. Did you ever realize how simple suicide is? It is death which is hard; the thought that perhaps there is nothing afterward. 'A little flurry at the grave, of which you are not aware, and that is all." Grimes studied the great space before him with curious eyes. "I have thought of it often," he said presently, "Miss Parkman, if I were to ask you to marry me, would you refuse if you knew I should immediately throw myself over the cliff at hearing the refusal?"

"I don't love you," she said simply. "Somehow I can't picture you doing anything like that."

"No," he said grimly, "I don't believe I would. If it would help matters, perhaps——" He shrugged his shoulders.

His voice was calm, even casual, but somehow it frightened her.

"We—we had better go," she said.

He took her arm.

"Then you wouldn't marry without love?" he said.

"What makes you think that?"

"Your answer to my question. You wouldn't change that?"

"No—you see, I—I couldn't, Mr. Grimes."

He bowed his head

"I do not like to make any one unhappy; but then, a lie would not help, you know," she told him.

"There are so many liars," he said, "it is strange no one has discovered that. I would rather you would be frank, Miss Parkman."

"I am sure my answer will always be the same, Mr. Grimes."

"I really had no hope that it would be different," he said slowly. "Of course, you know about me—my reputation, you know—everybody does. I had no right to expect——" He paused brokenly.

"Without counting that," she returned, "my answer would always be the same, Mr. Grimes."

"But why?" he cried almost fiercely. "Other girls have like me."

"I can understand that," she said gently.

"Then why——"

"Were they sorry?" she asked, without looking up.

He winced. "That is not fair," he said.

"Why?"

He hesitated a moment before speaking.

"Why?" she repeated.

"Love is blind," he told her feebly.

"But I am not, Mr. Grimes; I don't love you."

He glanced at her keenly.

"I believe I could have made you," he said.

"But you wouldn't," she returned "You wouldn't."

"How do you know that?"

"Somewhere about you," she said slowly, "there is still a soul, Mr. Grimes. If you had allowed yourself, you might have been a very fine gentleman."

"And as it is?" He attempted to be casual.

"Mr. Grimes, I will be honest with you."

"Well?"

"I hope I am a lady."

"Ah," he said, comprehending, "is it as bad as that?"

He helped her mount without speaking, and then swung rather heavily onto his horse. "This way," he said. "Excuse me, I will ride ahead. The trail is very narrow."

They went winding down in the last glow of the sun into the ever-widening realm of purple shadow, and rode silently on the carpet of pine needles beneath the gloom of the ghostly trees. Undergrowth hindered them and mighty trunks prostrate across the path, but ever slightly ahead, Grimes found the way unerringly. Thru a little basin surrounded by a circle of rocks, with here and there a pinnacle sharp and black against the evening; and after that a ravine that led ever downward until they emerged onto the open flats below.

Here Grimes drew up beside her.

"There is the road," he said, pointing. "I will race you to it, if you like, Miss Parkman. Pedro!"

At the command the little pinto pony sprang into life and ran with surprising swiftness beside the bigger animal. Grimes shook out his reins and the girl gave the pony the spurs. Drawing slightly ahead, Grimes shouted something which the girl could not catch, and disappeared over the brow of the hill, while the girl began to lose. She spurred again, but something seemed to have gone wrong with the pony; he dragged in his stride and ran heavily.

Grimes was waiting triumphant on the road as she came up.

"I am afraid it was unfair to race you," he cried, "but the pony should have done better than that. Why didn't you spur him?"

"I did," retorted the girl, and then added slowly: "Something is the matter, Mr. Grimes. I am afraid Pedro has gone lame!"

Next week's Ledger will contain the concluding chapters of this interesting story. You will miss a great treat if you do not read it to the end. We will give you constantly the very best stories of entertainment that money will buy, so send in your subscription and take the Ledger regularly, if you are not doing so. You will not regret it.

* * *

GRASPING AT STRAWS.

When Ferguson had closed the front door behind him he stood listening for a moment before uttering the "Coo-ee" with which he was in the habit of apprising Mrs. Ferguson of his arrival home. This time there was no answering "Coo-ee." The house was as silent as the tomb. No Marjorie came down the long stairs to greet him; no Mrs. Ferguson stood at the head of the stairs to give him a smile. Putting his coat and hat on the rack, he tiptoed noiselessly up the stairs. At the door of Mrs. Ferguson's room he encountered a strong smell of camphor, and he found Mrs. Ferguson stretched across the bed, either just coming out of or going into a fainting spell. He clasped her in his arms, begging her to tell him what had happened. She tried several times to speak, then ceased her incoherent mutterings, clung about his neck and gave way to paroxysms of weeping upon his shoulder.

He looked about for the cause of the trouble, called Marjorie, and no Marjorie replied. Finally he espied a piece of crumpled note paper lying upon the floor. He bent over sideways and obtained it.

Straightening it with difficulty in one hand, he held it out at arm's length and read:

> "Dearest Mamma: When you read this Harold and I will have been married. We are going to Niagara Falls for a wedding tour and to give papa time to get over his senseless opposition to Harold. Papa is the best papa in the world, has always been, except for his opposition to Harold and in his standing in the way of my happiness. I love him and shall always love him, and I hope he will forgive me. Your loving daughter.
>
> "MARJORIE."

Ferguson dropped the note, buried his face in Mrs. Ferguson's shoulder and his whole body shook with emotion. Mrs. Ferguson forgot the depth of her own grief. She raised her head and with swimming eyes looked into his face. He was laughing.

"What in the world!" she gasped.

"It's such a good joke," gasped Ferguson.

"But you hated Harold."

"You thought so."

"But your every action showed it. Even when he first began to call upon Marjorie, before he had been calling a month you began to treat him like a dog. You frowned at him, you covertly but plainly sneered at every opinion he advanced about anything. Why, that night when you took the alarm clock and went right into the room where they were at ten o'clock and wound it up right under his nose I thought I should die. I did not blame him for springing to his feet and slambanging out of the house."

"Neither did I."

"And you told Marjorie that it would be utterly futile for her to begin to care for Harold, because nothing could ever become of it. You nearly broke the poor child's heart."

"That was very sad, but the heart of youth is very plastic and very flexible."

"But you hated him so, and now you are laughing I don't understand——"

"You see, dear, Harold is quite the nicest young man who had ever called——"

"You surprise me; you never——"

"And it was very evident to me when he had been calling a few times that Marjorie did not care for him and never would care for him, and that he had no more than a friendly interest in her, which made me think of my boyhood days upon the farm. All kinds of cattle, you know, abominate straw as breakfast food, and if it is thrown into their manger they turn from it in bovine disgust. Still, straw is good for them, as good for them as Marjorie was good for Harold. On my father's farm they used to eat up every ounce of straw raised on the place and almost fight to get at it. We used to build the straw into a huge stack and build a low fence about the stack just high enough to prevent a cow's reaching it without some effort and just far enough from the stack so that she could barely reach the straw."

"But I don't see."

"Listen a minute. At first the cows ambled up carelessly to investigate the straw stack and we set the dogs upon them and drove them away. We ran them about half a mile, and if we even caught them looking at that straw stack we dogged them into the woods. These poor deluded cows used to sit up nights until they had seen the light extinguished in my window. Then they would crowd against that fence until they wrecked it. And then they filled up on straw.

"And so Harold and Marjorie are married; Harold is a fine boy, with splendid prospects, and Marjorie is the sweetest girl I have ever known, with the smoothest father that ever dogged a cow away from a straw stack. You ring for a messenger boy while I write a message of forgiveness, and then let's eat."

"Oh, James, I am so happy and so relieved, and so afraid of your devilish ingenuity that I never shall be able to trust you again!"

* * *

To Purify Ice.

Many young women, all of them graduates of hospital training schools in Maryland, have been taking the State Board examinations. Not a few of the candidates have complained of the difficult and at the same time unusual questions.

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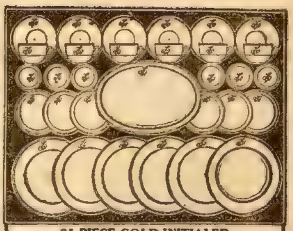

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DINNER SET FREE

For A Few Hours Easy Work

Every piece pure white, high grade china; blue edge and gold initialed. One of the richest looking, most stylish Dinner Sets on the market. Absolutely up-to-the-minute and of undisputable quality. Guaranteed not to craze. Will add beauty to any table. Get this set. Merely give away FREE 12 Beautiful Art Pictures 16x20 inches (sold for $1.00 each in many stores) with 12 cans of White Cloverine Salve, which you sell at 25c. each. Millions using it for cuts, eczema, catarrh, colds, piles, burns, etc. Send us the $3.00 collected and the set is yours. We've been making these offers for 20 years. The Wilson plan is the easiest and absolutely square. No money required. Simply send name and address. Pictures and Salve sent promptly prepaid.

WILSON CHEMICAL CO. Dept. 921 TYRONE, PA.

FREE CLOTH SAMPLES

Big selection of cloth samples—Guaranteed all-wool Serges, new fancy Worsteds, stylish Cassimeres, all latest shades and patterns—everything good dressers wear—Free. Postal will bring it. *We make fine clothes for men* to individual measure, absolutely guaranteed to fit and please at prices that will astonish you. Don't buy suit or overcoat anywhere at any price—until you have got our selection of cloth samples, fashion models, tape line, everything Free. Stop paying high prices for clothes. Write quick for our amazing suit offer.

THE CAPITOL TAILORS, Dept. 103, Chicago, Ill.

Only $2 Down

One Year to Pay!

100,000 now in use

$24 Buys the New Butterfly Jr. No. 2. Light running, easy cleaning, close skimming, durable. Guaranteed a lifetime. Skims 95 quarts per hour. Made also in five larger sizes up to No. 8 shown here.

30 Days' Free Trial Earns its own cost and more by what it saves in cream. Postal brings Free catalog, folder and "direct from factory" offer. Buy from the manufacturer and save money.

ALBAUGH-DOVER CO. (12)

2335 Marshall Blvd. CHICAGO

$100 TYPEWRITER $15.50

Factory Rebuilt and Guaranteed

Sent upon receipt of price, or if preferred will send C. O. D.

Subject to Examination.

If Not Entirely Satisfactory Return at Our Expense.

CENTRAL TYPEWRITER CO., 100-106 NO. FIFTH AVE., CHICAGO

LEARN RAGTIME

Let me teach you Rag-Time Piano Playing by Mail. You learn easily in a few lessons, at home. My system is so simple you'll play a real ragtime piece at your 5th lesson. Whether you can play now, or not, I'll teach you to play anything in happy ragtime. "Money Back Guarantee." Write at once for special low terms and testimonials.

AXEL CHRISTENSEN, "Czar of Ragtime,"

20 E. Jackson Blvd., Dept. 811, CHICAGO, ILL.

THOUSANDS HAVE KIDNEY TROUBLE AND DON'T KNOW IT

Weak and unhealthy kidneys cause so much sickness and suffering and when through neglect or other causes, kidney trouble is permitted to continue, serious results may be expected.

Your other organs may need attention—but your kidneys should have attention first because their work is most important.

If you feel that your kidneys are the cause of your sickness or run down condition commence taking Dr. Kilmer's Swamp-Root, the great kidney, liver and bladder remedy, because if it proves to be the remedy you need and your kidneys begin to improve they will help all the other organs to health.

Prevalency of Kidney Disease.

Most people do not realize the alarming increase and remarkable prevalency of kidney disease. While kidney disorders are among the most common diseases that prevail, they are almost the last recognized by patients, who usually content themselves with doctoring the effects, while the original disease constantly undermines the system.

A Trial will Convince Anyone.

Thousands of people have testified that the mild and immediate effect of Swamp-Root, the great kidney, liver and bladder remedy, is soon realized and that it stands the highest for its remarkable results in the most distressing cases.

Symptoms of Kidney Trouble.

Swamp-Root is not recommended for everything but if you suffer from annoying bladder troubles, frequently passing water night and day, smarting or irritation in passing, brick-dust or sediment, headache, backache, lame back, dizziness, poor digestion, sleeplessness, nervousness, heart disturbance due to bad kidney trouble, skin eruptions from bad blood, neuralgia, rheumatism, lumbago, bloating, irritability, worn-out feeling, lack of ambition, may be loss of flesh or sallow complexion, kidney trouble in its worst form may be stealing upon you.

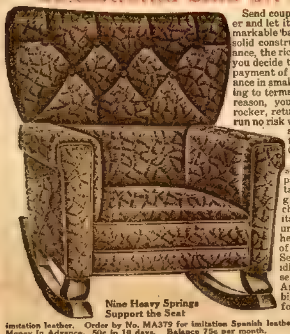
Swamp-Root is Pleasant to Take.

If you are already convinced that Swamp-Root is what you need, you can purchase the regular fifty-cent and one-dollar size bottles at all drug stores.

SPECIAL NOTE—You may obtain a sample size bottle of Swamp-Root by enclosing ten cents to Dr. Kilmer & Co., Binghamton, N. Y. This gives you the opportunity to prove the remarkable merit of this medicine. They will also send you a book of valuable information, containing many of the thousands of grateful letters received from men and women who say they found Swamp-Root to be just the remedy needed in kidney, liver and bladder troubles. The value and success of Swamp-Root are so well known that you are advised to send for a sample size bottle. Address Dr. Kilmer & Co., Binghamton, N. Y. Be sure to say you read this offer in the Chicago Ledger.

No Money In Advance

Sensational Sale on Rockers



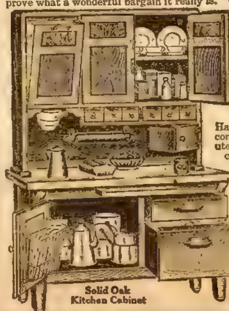
Send coupon for this big, roomy rocker and let it prove for itself what a remarkable bargain it really is. Note its solid construction, its massive appearance, the rich grained upholstering. If you decide to keep it, make first small payment of 50c in 10 days and pay balance in small monthly payments according to terms stated below. If, for any reason, you do not wish to keep the rocker, return it at our expense. You run no risk whatever, because you don't send a cent in advance. Mail the coupon today—sure. Order by number.

Rocker Bargain. Frame strongly built with exposed parts neatly finished in imitation Mahogany, nicely glossed. Upholstered in choice of black or Spanish imitation leather. Seat measures 20x20 in.; supported by 9 heavy steel springs. Width of chair 32 in.; height 36 in. Seat 17 in. from floor, splendidly upholstered. Height from seat to top of back, 26 in. Arms about 5 in. wide. This big, handsome rocker is built for solid comfort.

Order by No. MA378 for black imitation leather. Order by No. MA379 for imitation Spanish leather. Price only $9.98. Terms: No Money In Advance. 50c in 10 days. Balance 75c per month.

Kitchen Cabinet Bargain

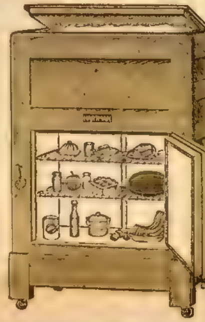
Mail coupon below and let us send you this famous Hartman Solid Oak Kitchen Cabinet without one cent in advance, no C. O. D. or references like others ask, just to prove what a wonderful bargain it really is. We know you will find this Cabinet a wonderful value at our Special Bargain Price. Note the many up-to-the-minute time and labor-saving features.


Solid Oak
Kitchen Cabinet

Removable tilting metal flour bin with sifter attachment, 40 lb. capacity. 2 partitioned spice drawers made to represent 6 small drawers, each divided into 3 sections. Swinging sugar container, 7 pound capacity. Wire rolling pin rack. Removeable sliding kneading board. Handy cupboard for utensils in base, with convenient wire rack on door. Large utensil drawer and convenient bread and cake box with ventilated sliding metal top. Upper section of Cabinet is beautifully trimmed with chipped glass doors. Has roomy, handy cupboard with shelf. White wood top measures 42x26 inches. Extreme height of cabinet 65 inches. Base is mounted on invisible slides to prevent marring of floor. Attention is called to the continuous top construction, a feature only found on high priced and high grade Cabinets. All drawer bottoms, cupboard bottom and panels are made of 3 ply lumber which will absolutely prevent warping or splitting. Drawer pulls, catches, etc., are finished in bright copper. Entire case Gloss Golden finish. Send coupon—send no money—for free trial according to our liberal credit terms.

Order by No. MA258. Price $6.85. Terms: No Money In Advance. 50c in 10 Days. Balance $1.25 Per Month.

Grand Refrigerator Bargain

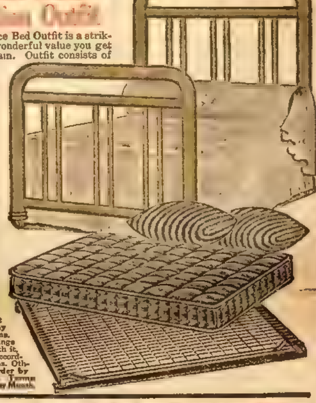


A wonderful offering in Hartman's Sanitary White Enamel Lined Refrigerator—one of the biggest bargain values we offer. This is strictly a high grade Refrigerator in every particular, carefully constructed. Don't miss this big value, apparent in every feature. Refrigerator is made in popular lift-lid design with steel lid holder that holds lid in two positions—of genuine ash—rich golden finish—with solid brass trimmings. Has two nickel wire shelves. Shelves are made of genuine steel wire woven on heavy steel wire frame and heavily tinned. Ice rack made of galvanized steel bars welded together. Air after passing over ice falls directly into provision compartment displacing warmer and lighter air, forcing it up flues at either end into ice compartment where it is purified and cooled. Has inside case of odorless and tasteless lumber. Sanitary and economical. Has practical syphon drip cup. Insulation in the dead air space and non-conducting sheathing. Note special handle device for padlock, as illustrated. Ice compartment holds 60 pounds of ice. Is 42 inches high, 23½ inches wide, 15½ inches deep. Provision compartment 19¼x14¼x11¼ inches.

To prove that this is a wonderful refrigerator bargain, we will ship it on free trial without deposit, no C. O. D. or security of any kind. Just send the coupon.

Order by No. MA253. Price $11.95. Terms: No Money In Advance. 50c in 10 days. Balance $1 per Month.

5-Piece Bed Combination Outfit

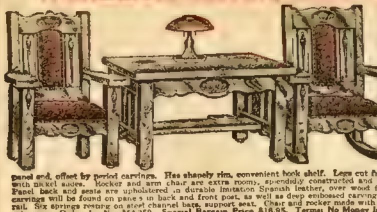


This elegant 5-piece Bed Outfit is a striking example of the wonderful value you get in a Hartman bargain. Outfit consists of handsome chil-less Steel Bed made with full 1 1-16 inch continuous tubing, trimmed with 12 5-16-inch upright fillers, connected at top and bottom to heavy ¾-inch tubular steel cross rods. Full size only—4 feet 6 inches. Height at head, 54 inches; at foot, 34 inches. Choice of White or Vernis Martin. Mattress covered with durable striped ticking, filled with wood fibre and has soft sanitary cotton top. Springs made with heavy angle iron frame, tin wire fabric top connected at ends with steel helical springs.

Pillows measure full 18x25 inches, weight 5 pounds per pair. Filled with selected hen feathers, properly cured, sterilized and thoroughly dedusted. Guaranteed soft, elastic and odorless. Heavy grade blue and white striped ticking.

We feel so sure that you will be delighted with this wonderful bargain that we're willing to send it out to you without a cent in advance, without any C.O.D.'s or other restrictions. Just the coupon below brings it. If you are pleased with it, keep the outfit and pay according to our easy credit terms. Otherwise, return at our expense. Order by No. MA266. Price only [illegible]. Terms only 50c in 10 days. Balance $1 per Month.

Wonderful Library Set Bargain



Wonderful value in correctly designed William and Mary Period 3-piece Library Set—substantially built thruout of solid oak, properly finished Fumed. Table made with large 26x38 inch top, trimmed with 3-panel end, offset by period carvings. Has shapely rim, convenient book shelf. Legs cut from 2-inch stock, fitted with nickel sades. Rocker and arm chair are extra roomy, splendidly constructed and unusually comfortable. Panel back and seats are upholstered in durable imitation Spanish leather, over wood fibre and jute. Dainty carvings will be found on panels in back and front post, as well as deep embossed carvings on top rail and seat rail. Six springs resting on steel channel bars, support seat. Chair and rocker made with genuine quarter-sawed oak arms. Order by No. MA259. **Special Bargain Price $16.95. Terms: No Money In Advance. 50c In 10 Days. Balance $1.25 Per Month.**

Only 50¢ in 10 Days

Sensational Sale

The proof of the quality of any article is in the using of it. That is why we invite you to take your pick from these two pages of wonderful bargains. We will send you the bargain of your choice without a cent of advance payment, no deposit, no C. O. D., no references asked like others do, no mortgage, security or red tape of any kind.

We want you to judge our merchandise, not by the descriptions and illustrations shown here—which cannot begin to do it justice—but by **actual use in your own home.** We assume the entire responsibility. No obligation of any kind whatever rests upon you.

We make this offer because we want you to see the tremendous values we offer.

The articles shown in this advertisement are merely an illustration of wonderful bargains shown in our mammoth catalog.

Put us to the test. Let our merchandise speak for itself. If the quality stands the test of actual use, and you decide to keep what you order, pay only 50c in 10 days after arrival and the balance in small monthly payments according to prices and terms quoted under each item. If for any reason you do not wish to keep it, return shipment at our expense.

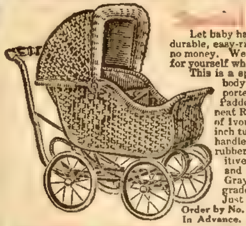
HARTMAN'S Low Prices and Liberal Credit Terms

The House of Hartman is the gigantic home furnishing institution organized solely for the purpose of selling dependable home furnishings exclusively on easy credit. Hartman's is the largest concern of its kind in the World. We have over $12,000,000 capital and resources—a buying power so vast that we can buy merchandise of every kind in stupendous quantities. We control the entire outputs of some of the largest factories and mills in the United States. Our tremendous volume of business enables us to quote lowest rock-bottom prices and to extend the most liberal credit terms ever devised.

Send no money—just the coupon—for any one of the big money-saving bargains shown on these two pages. Then when it arrives, you can decide at your leisure as to whether or not you wish to keep it.

Only one of these bargains will be sent to a family on these amazing terms; but when you receive our mammoth Bargain Catalog you can order as much as you like—all at bed-rock prices and on our easy credit terms.

Special Baby Carriage Offer

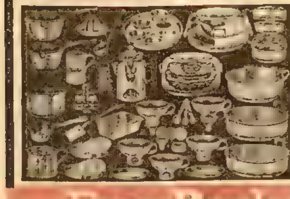


Let baby have his outings in this full size, handsome, durable, easy-riding carriage. Just mail the coupon—send no money. We will send it to you promptly. Then judge for yourself what a wonderful bargain it is.

This is a splendidly constructed Reed Carriage. The body and hood are made throughout of imported flat reed with half round reed rolls. Padded sides, seat, back and lining of hood of neat Repp, in colors to match body. Your choice of Ivory, Gray and Baronial Brown. Has full ⅝ inch tubular steel gear and pushers, nickel plated handle corners, large 12 inch wheels with ½ inch rubber tires and nickel plated hub caps. Positive foot brake and sensitive springs. Ivory and Baronial bodies fitted with Black gear. Gray body fitted with Gray gear. Strictly high grade throughout and an exceptional value. Just mail the coupon—send no money.

Order by No. MA257. Price only $18.75. Terms: No Money In Advance. 50c in 10 days. Balance $1.50 per Month.

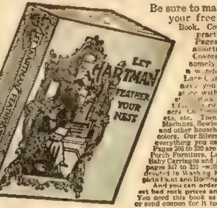
[illegible] 42-Piece Aluminum Ware Set



Here's your chance to get a wonderful 42-piece set of Aluminum Ware at a most remarkable bargain price. Don't send any money—just the coupon and we will immediately ship you the set for free trial. Each piece fully guaranteed—is seamless—will not scald, chip or crack. Complete set consists of—9-piece Combination Outfit consisting of 2-piece self-basting roaster, pierced tray with 5 egg poachers or custard cups and dairy pan; 7-cup Coffee Percolator with inset (2 pieces); 6-qt. Preserving Kettle; 2 Bread Pans; 2 Pie Plates; 1-qt. Lipped Sauce Pan; 2-qt. Lipped Sauce Pan; 1 Ladle; 2 Jelly Cake Pans with loose bottoms (4 pieces), 1 Castor Set, consisting of Salt Shaker, Pepper Shaker, Toothpick Holder and Frame (4 pieces) 1 Measuring Cup, 1 Combination Funnel (5 pieces) 3 Measuring Spoons, 1 Tea and Coffee Strainer, 1 Sugar Shaker, 1 Grater, 1 Cake Turner, 1 Lemon Juice Extractor.

Order by No. MA261. Price $9.95. Terms: No Money in Advance. 50c in 10 Days. Balance 75c per Month.

Get Hartman's Mammoth Money-Saving Bargain Book FREE

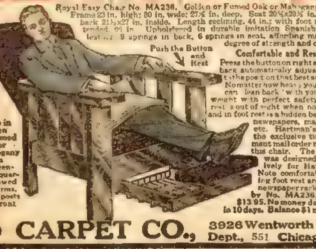

LET HARTMAN FEATHER YOUR NEST
HARTMAN FEATHER YOUR NEST

Be sure to mail Coupon in left hand corner for your free copy of our Mammoth Bargain Book. Contains thousands of wonderful bargains in practically everything for beautifying the home. Pages 17 to 63 are filled with the most beautiful assortment of Rugs, Carpets, Table and Couch Covers, Portieres, etc., you can imagine, all handsomely illustrated in natural colors. Pages [illegible] to 67, a wonderful display of exquisite Table Sets and Lace Curtains. Then on up to page 260 you will imagine you are walking through an immense furniture store with an endless array of luxuriously upholstered Rockers, Easy Chairs, Couches and Davenports, beautifully richly carved Dining Room and Library Sets, Dressers, Chiffoniers, Dressing Tables, Writing Desks, China Closets, etc. Then comes 32 pages of Kitchen Cabinets, Sewing Machines, Sewing Tables, Mirrors, Lamps, Clocks, Phonographs and other household articles, many pages beautifully printed in colors. Our Silverware section, pages 293 to 305, shows practically everything you can think of in elegant guaranteed Silverware. Pages 306 to 330 are devoted to Traveling Bags, Suit Cases, Trunks, Porch Furniture, Lawn Swings, Glass and China Ware, Go-Carts, Baby Carriages and Refrigerators. The Stove and Range section—pages 347 to 391—will supply your every need. Then there are pages devoted to Washing Machines, Wringers, etc., and two full and complete Paint and Roofing and Jewelry sections.

And you can order anything you want from this book at lowest bed rock prices and on the easiest credit terms ever devised. You need this book as your reliable shopping guide. Write a postal or send coupon for it today.

[illegible] Royal Easy Chair Bargain

Royal Easy Chair No. MA236. Golden or Fumed Oak or Mahogany finish. Frame 23 in. high; 30 in. wide; 27½ in. deep. Seat 20½x20½ in. inside; back 21½x27 in. inside. Length reclining, 44 in.; with foot rest extended, 65 in. Upholstered in durable imitation Spanish brown leather. 8 springs in back, 6 springs in seat, affording maximum degree of strength and comfort.

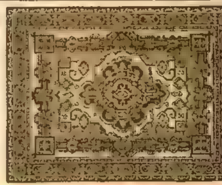

Push the Button and Rest

Made in Golden or Fumed Oak or Mahogany Finish. Has genuine quarter-sawed oak arms, front posts and front rail.

Comfortable and Restful. Press the button on right arm, and back automatically adjusts itself to the position that best suits you. No matter how heavy you are you can lean back with your whole weight with perfect safety. Foot rest is out of sight when not in use and in foot rest is a hidden basket for newspapers, magazines, etc. Hartman's control the exclusive time payment mail order rights on this chair. The pattern was designed exclusively for Hartman's. Note comfortable sliding foot rest and handy newspaper rack. Order by No. MA236. Price $13.95. No money down. 50c in 10 days. Balance $1 monthly.

Brussels Rug Special

Here is a grand bargain in a handsome, seamless Brussels rug. Is of beautiful design—in a rich Oriental medallion pattern. The colors are rich in tone, embracing a combination of shades with greens, tans and browns predominating. The worsted used in its weaving presents a surface that will render very fine service. Four sizes to choose from. You cannot duplicate this bargain on such liberal terms.



Order by No. MA260. State size wanted.

Size 6x9 ft. Price $11.75. Terms: No Money In Advance. 50c in 10 days. Balance $1.00 per Month.

Size 6 ft. 3 in. x 10 ft. 6 in. Price $18.35. Terms: No Money In Advance. 50c in 10 days. Balance $1.50 per Month.

Size 9x12 ft. Price $19.65. Terms: No Money In Advance. 50c in 10 days. Balance $1.50 per Month.

Size 11 ft. 3 in. x 12 ft. Price $26.85. Terms: No Money In Advance. 50c in 10 days. Balance $2.00 per Month.

Free Book Coupon

HARTMAN FURNITURE AND CARPET CO.,
3926 Wentworth Avenue, Dept. 551 Chicago, Ill

Without any obligation on my part please send me your Big Free Bargain Catalog showing thousands of wonderful bargains in home furnishings—all sold at rock bottom prices on your long time credit terms.

My Name is ....

R. F. D. or Street Address ....

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HARTMAN FURNITURE AND CARPET CO., 3926 Wentworth Ave., Dept., 551 Chicago, Ill.

HARTMAN Will Trust You

Order Coupon

HARTMAN FURNITURE & CARPET COMPANY,
3926 Wentworth Avenue Dept. 551 Chicago, Ill.

Without any money in advance, please send me article named below. If I keep it, I will pay 50c in 10 days after arrival of shipment and balance in monthly payments as per prices and terms quoted in this advertisement. If I decide not to keep it, I will return it to you at your expense.

Name of article wanted .... No. ....

My Name is ....

R. F. D. or Street Address ....

[illegible] .... State ....

Blackton's Sweetheart

Or, The Fatal Shot

By P. G. Estee

[Copyright 1917 by W. D. Boyce Co.]

Begun in No. 6, February 10. Subscriptions can begin with that issue or back copies can be obtained from news stands, our agents or by mail from office of publication.

PART II.

"A MILLION dollars and a million men wouldn't put us back where we were," said Jarden, furiously "If the boys lay hands on the men that did the work they'll take 'em apart bone from bone!"

Jarden had swung to the step and stood with Blackton as the engine halted as close as the masses of rock and debris would allow. An appalling ruin had taken the place of what yesterday had been a well-ordered and nearly completed engineering triumph.

"We'll go back," said the manager. "The Scaltine is done, but the Elm will run a little longer, until——"

None sought to console the young man, altho he knew that any one of them would have given an arm or imperiled his life would it have helped matters.

The unnatural calm remained with Blackton all that day as he worked, turning affairs over to Judge Hickey to handle as best he could for the interests of the mortgagors.

"He's going to do something desperate," Hamilton told Moore. "Between us we must watch him every minute."

In spite of their watchfulness the manager of the L. & M. disappeared that night. At first he was filled with the blind unreasoning desire to hide himself from all. He had failed. The railway constructed by his father and turned over to him as a trust was gone. His first wild thought to search out Kratts and kill was gone. To escape all notice and rest was the one desire of which he was conscious

At dawn his train halted at a junction, and there he saw her once more. Verda Mason was leaning from the window of the parlor car of the Y. K. & N. Her dark, inscrutable eyes, fixed on him, conveyed no message. Rather she seemed to be waiting.

Blackton could see past her slight figure, and noted that the car was nearly empty except for the trim maid hovering near. He strode swiftly to the window, his eyes alight.

"Tell me!" he cried. "Verda, there must have been some explanation. I was a fool. Tell——" He broke off and a cloud of anger swept over him. Advancing down the aisle of the car toward Verda Mason was his enemy, Kratts.

The girl turned terrified eyes to the young man. "Go!" she begged. "He will be angry, and I must go with him today. I will write you all. He is——"

The sharp clang of the bell of a yard engine cut short the sound of her voice, but Blackton had already whirled aside, livid with fury. For an instant he stood motionless as the train began to move and gathering speed rolled out of the station.

Then, with a growl of rage, he sprinted after the last car. She should not go unless she wished. Kratts had his business, had the girl he loved, but she was not a willing captive, and that wrong could at least be righted.

A track shovel thrown down by a careless section man decided that day's event by tripping the running man very neatly, and when he had recovered himself the train was far out of the yard limits

Blackton's plans had altered. He would search out Kratts. If the financier refused to leave the girl free he would—well, there was nothing he would not do.

Little things change the currents of lives. A careless operator received a message that day for a passenger on the following train. Because he was lazy he did not deliver it to the conductor, and because he was careless he did not attempt to relay it to the next station. The message should have swept the black mood from Blackton's mind

That young man was two hours behind the financier when the latter left Chicago, and missed him by a few minutes at the broker's offices. After that Kratts seemed to drop out of existence For two days Blackton searched for the man among a labyrinth of offices, hotels and apartments. Very evidently Kratts was well aware of the pursuit and had taken steps to throw the infuriated manager off the trail until the latter's anger had cooled.

At last, disheartened, Blackton turned westward. There was a chance that he was at the Chicago offices again, and thither he directed his steps. Now, however, he adopted guile, and it was a foppish young man who appeared at the bachelor apartments of the financier one evening, and the name he gave was Marsh.

Mr. Kratts was in, and the secretary would consult with him regarding admittance on important business. Mr. Marsh was to come up.

Blackton strode down the corridor chewing his cigar furiously. There was no other sign of the tremendous rage that possessed him, and to the secretary, in the outer room of the suite, he appeared a very ordinary young man The name of Marsh was familiar to that gentleman. Apparently its owner was in high favor with his employer, for the mention of the caller's identity was instant admission. The secretary held the door wide and Blackton, entering, snapped it shut between them. The big form of the financier did not turn, and for a moment the young manager struggled with himself for self-control

"Turn around, Kratts," he invited.

"Well, by——," began the big man as his surprised gaze met Blackton's cold regard. The gray eyes, steel-colored now, bored unblinkingly into the snapping black ones of the man at the desk, and with an effort Kratts seemed to regain his normal manner. "Have a seat, Blackton," he said, and leaned back in the comfortable chair pulled close to a paper-littered table. "Ready to quit, are you?" he added.

"When you and I close a deal."

The young man advanced a step. He was willing to give this man a chance for his life, but Kratts' tone stirred his blood, and he seemed to see the face of the man thru a mist. Kratts did not rise, but negligently waved a hand toward the table corner, where under the gas jet lay a mounted revolver.

"Drop the shade, will you, Blackton? Those cursed bugs are buzzing all over that light."

To his own surprise Blackton found himself obeying the command and lowering the shade over the open window. He turned back, again ignoring the proffer of a seat.

"I am going to kill you tonight, Kratts, unless you do two things—drop your persecution of Verda Mason, let the girl go in peace, and——"

"Who is Verda Mason?" demanded the financier, leaning forward.

"Don't quibble. The girl in the Serena the night we took the car from your yards. The girl at the junction a few days ago."

The other stared at the white-faced young man in what seemed real amazement. Then he flung back his head and laughed, the small black eyes sinking out of sight in the puffy unhealthy-colored flesh of his cheeks.

"That girl was there because she had pretty nearly the best right in the world. I aim to have more dealings with her after——"

Blackton had not moved, but the expression of his face warned Kratts, and the secretary loafing in the outer room heard the financier's deep voice boom out in a warning threat.

"Stop right where you are, my young friend! Seeing you are so in earnest I will tell you all about your lady friend."

The listening secretary heard Blackton's voice cut in sharp and tense with anger, and then a roaring explosion, a groan and an exclamation of horror. He was no coward, and without hesitation he flung himself against the locked door, and as it gave way he beheld a terrible sight. Bending over the financier, seemingly frozen in sheer horror, stood the man he knew as Marsh. The big form of Kratts lay back in the easy chair in an attitude of rest, but there was a red stream gushing from a wound in his temple. Even the unpracticed eye of the secretary grasped the fact that grim tragedy had occurred and that his masterful employer was beyond help.

"You did it—you!" he screamed at Blackton. "You still have your hand on the gun! Drop it!"

The young man's right hand unclosed nervelessly and he gasped as he looked down at the weapon about which his fingers had been clasped.

"It exploded. I was not near—not touching," he said faintly. "Must have grasped it with the idea of stopping further explosions. I was so startled that I——"

"Yes," sneered the secretary. "Tell all that to your attorney or some one that will believe it." He dropped his hand suggestively to a heavy weight. "Step out into that other room with me while I call the police station for doctors and help. Don't touch that gun again."

"Certainly not," said Blackton.

His voice was calm now. The worst had happened. Murder would be the charge and he would be convicted. Even in death Kratts was a winner. He preserved the same stoical calm while the secretary, in nervous haste, used the telephone. He was still forcing himself to an attitude of watchful calm when the doctors arrived and confirmed his instinctive knowledge that the shot had been instantly fatal. The police and house detective contented themselves with the most cursory of examinations as far as the premises were concerned. Guilt was certain. The prisoner did not even deny that he was alone in the room with the murdered man. He did not even try to set up a suicide story. The revolver they did not touch and an officer was left on duty to see that the room remained as it was for the coroner.

At the door the prisoner turned and looked back at the silent form. "I did not kill you, Kratts, you know I did not, but no one will ever believe me. You win. I was angry enough, but—I—did—not."

The officers laughed. "Getting ready for the insane defense," whispered the sergeant to the lieutenant, and the latter nodded grimly

The prisoner made only one request, and that was to have a message sent to Judge Hickey. He believed himself innocent and would fight for his life, but he could not see one ray of hope

Pacing his cell the long night thru, Blackton did not know that even before the officers had escorted him from the hotel a telephone message had gone from the young secretary to a number far out on the boulevard.

The officer on guard was besieged by reporters, but neither bribes nor threats moved him. There was to be no admittance to the room. The slender girl,

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with notebook and pencil, who came later seemed to have a more potent charm, however, for at her plea the door was opened and the officer remained in the outer room while she entered the room where Thomas Kratts seemed to sleep in the big chair.

The revolver about which Blackton's fingers had been clenched still lay with its grim muzzle pointing at the silent figure. The girl's dark eyes turned away from the body and swept the room appraisingly. Nothing was displaced; evidently there had been no struggle.

She turned the light higher and noticed now a little heap of gray dust inside the trigger guard and half covering the trigger. On the floor in front of the desk lay a half-smoked cigar. She examined it without curiosity at first. Suddenly she straightened.

"I wonder!" she muttered. Deftly she slipped half of the little heap of dust into her handkerchief.

There was no write-up next morning from the one person able to penetrate to the room of tragedy. Instead, the young woman who had studied the room for details was on an eastbound train, proving that her surmise might be correct. Expert opinion she must have, and the one person able to give that opinion was in New York.

Of all the dailies not one even hinted at a solution of the crime other than that the young railroad owner had killed his older and more successful business rival. One, with more courage, stated that the persecution of the L. & M. had been merciless, and that the murderer possibly deserved a hard fate, while deploring the fact that the law had not been invoked. They were to learn later that the law had been Kratts' law only.

The decision of the coroner's jury was as speedy and in accord with the evidence. Shagrock Blackton was held to trial, and without bail, for the charge was murder. His own statement of innocence and the story of an unexpected and unexplained discharge of the weapon was accepted as either a cleverly planned foundation for an insanity plea or the delusion of a man really driven insane by his wrongs.

Meanwhile the dark-eyed girl had been in New York and was back, and if Blackton suffered, she suffered, also. Every clank of the wheels had said over and over, "Why did you not speak? Why did you not speak?"

As she struggled to hold to her belief in the young man's innocence, the words shaped themselves accusingly in her mind. She could only reiterate, "If I had known!"

Blackton's first visitor was Judge Hickey, and the aged attorney brought with him one of the best lawyers of the city.

Old and wise, the Judge believed Blackton guilty, but in his mind acquitted him of blood guilt, believing that the months of worry had weakened his employer's mind to the point where the culmination of his troubles, all attributable to the dead man, had driven him quite insane for the time. He proposed to assist in the defense, and intended that to be the basis upon which they fought for the prisoner's life. His first shock came when he announced this to Blackton.

"No insanity plea, Judge," declared the prisoner. "I am not insane. I do not believe I shot Kratts. If I did I was not insane except with rage. Either I am innocent and should be acquitted, or I killed him and should be punished."

"If you believe yourself innocent, let us help you out, and then you may be able to uncover the truth," argued the shrewd city lawyer. He shared Judge Hickey's belief in Blackton's insanity.

"Fate itself has tried to trap you, boy,' said the old Judge. "It's the death penalty if you persist. We can't even hang a hope on a plea of self-defense. Are you sure he did not reach for the gun first?"

"Perfectly sure, and just as sure that I did not touch the thing until Kratts was shot. Tell me, Judge, do my friends on the Elm believe me guilty?"

Judge Hickey shook his head sadly. "They do, Shag, they do. No one blames you."

"Can they believe that I would shoot an unarmed man? I could have taken my bare hands and killed him with pleasure, but I never even thought of a weapon. I have one favor to ask before the trial. I would like to talk with Maida Kratts; you know where she can be found."

"All right, my boy. No one else? I had a line from our once good fellow-worker, Miss Mason. She expressed belief in your complete innocence."

Blackton turned deathly white, but forced himself to speak coldly.

"Thank the lady, and tell her I am glad she does not feel that I robbed her of Kratts."

The Judge stared at him in a puzzled manner. "Sure you wouldn't care to see her? She might talk some sense into you. She used to on the Elm."

The young man winced under the thrust, but refused to see any visitors other than the Judge and Attorney Dumen.

"A letter today from Hamilton shows that business is good on the Elm again," added the Judge. "It seems that the B. N. and Y. K. & N., with the animus of Kratts' hate removed, have no wish to fight us. If you—can you not remember something more about that night? Could that secretary have slipped in behind you——"

"I am thinking every minute, Judge, trying to think what happened just before the flash and report. Something—something, but I was so enraged that nothing was clear, not even his face."

As the Judge said, the men out on the L. & M. had stood firm in their friendship, but reluctantly admitted that their manager must have been guilty. The hunt for the miscreants who had blown up the Scaltine tunnel had been without success, and it looked as if they would escape punishment for the wrecking of the work which had indirectly placed the Elm's manager in his terrible plight.

The trial opened before an eminently fair judge, and this was the one glimmer of hope that shone thru the clouds of gloom among the prisoner's friends. Hamilton and Moore had come on for the trial, and the great room was full of people. Some few came with kindly feelings for the young man, but the greater number were called by morbid curiosity.

To the listeners the defense seemed to be too perfunctory to be offered for a man on trial for his life. They marveled at the listlessness of Dumen, who, in cross-examination, sought to make no points except one, that the prisoner had at no time admitted guilt; and to the audience and even the jury it seemed that he wasted valuable time establishing the exact position of the revolver and its surroundings. Then came the first surprise, when Dumen, pursuing the young secretary with searching questions, established the fact that the revolver, an old make, had been left cocked all that day, but pointing almost directly toward the wall.

It was the morning of the second day of the trial before the defense displayed further animation, and then, when the prosecuting attorney had rested his case with a rather contemptuous fling at his opponents, Dumen sprung the real surprise of the case.

"Miss Kratts."

Blackton thrilled. He had wished to see the lady who had given him the lease of the Scaltine tracts, but why had his attorneys bothered her with the trial? Nothing touching his relations with the financier was material to the case. As he stared at the girl's veiled face, he wondered if she, rather than Wijand, had mailed him the hint conveyed by the page of history. Had Wijand assisted at all?

Then, as the oath was to be administered, the girl flung back her veil, and Blackton found himself looking into the dark eyes of the young woman who had been his special agent. Her face was pale, but her gaze, grave and direct, met his wildly questioning one without faltering.

He, who knew her expressions so well, imagined that but for the surroundings her face might have dimpled with the little mischievous smile he had loved to watch. Now the dark eyes were inscrutable, as she turned to give attention to the attorney.

"Have you met the prisoner?"

"I worked in his office?"

"In the interest of your uncle?"

"No!" For the first time the girl's tones were vehement.

"Did you go to the room in which your uncle lay dead about eleven that night?"

"Yes."

"Did you do this because you felt great sorrow?"

"No."

"Because you hoped to find some evidence of the manner of his death?"

"Yes."

"Did you find such evidence?"

"Yes."

There was a profound sensation. The crowd stood on its mental tiptoes, the prosecuting attorney lost his bored expression, and even the judge leaned forward more alertly. He had wondered, too, why Dumen seemed so inefficient.

"Did you find that some person other than the prisoner killed Mr. Kratts?"

"No."

"Did he commit suicide?"

"No."

"Do you mean that the revolver was discharged without human agency?"

"Yes."

"What discharged the revolver, causing the death of Thomas Kratts?"

The question was out and a hush fell on the audience as the witness, with her dark, fearless eyes full on the jury, spoke.

"The flutterings of a moth, which, with its wings and body singed in the flame of the open gas jet, fell on the trigger of the weapon which lay below."

The prosecuting attorney was on his feet protesting angrily.

"Surely, your honor, you will not allow our time to be wasted in this——"

"Overruled," came the stern reply. "A human life is at stake. No time is wasted when we desire truth to establish his innocence or guilt."

Amid a ripple of hisses the attorney sat down, his face flaming red at the rebuke.

The judge leaned forward. "Tell us, without quibble or question, just why you believe this," he said quietly.

The attorney sprang to his feet again.

(Continued on Page 17)

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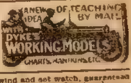

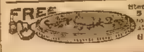

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GIVEN TO ANY WOMAN. BEAUTIFUL 100 piece gold dec. dinner set for distributing (not selling) only 5 doz. pkgs. Diamond Dust Soap Powder free among friends. No money or experience needed. New Method Mfg. Co., 306 W. Superior St., Chicago.

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300 PESOS VILLA AND CARRANZA CURRENCY for $1. Fred Fickel, 418 East Overland, El Paso, Texas.

Blackton's Sweetheart.

(Continued From Page 15.)

but quailed at the storm of hisses which called forth the stern rapping of the gavel. He faltered and sat down with objection unvoiced.

With those magnetic, earnest eyes meeting the appraising, unbelieving ones of the jurors, the girl told in simple words of her belief in the innocence of the accused man, how the discovery that her uncle, in turning to confront Blackton, had swung his chair far back, bringing him within the line of the revolver which usually lay upon his desk in a certain position, had strengthened that belief. Her uncle had many enemies, and his life had been attempted before. Why the weapon should have been cocked ready for discharge she could not explain, except that her uncle had perhaps believed Blackton would seek him.

She told of noting the dust within the trigger guard, and wondering if it could have any bearing on the discharge of the weapon, and of comparing with it ashes from the cigar dropped from the prisoner's cigar. What she found caused her carefully to remove a little of the dust from beneath the guard and take it to New York to one of the greatest chemists in the world. His report sent her hastening back to examine the room which at her order had not been disturbed following the inquest. The secretary and the sergeant had noticed the dust, and she had called the officer on guard that night to witness her action in taking it.

For the first time the girl's voice trembled, as she told of what seemed a vain search for the one thing necessary to make her chain of facts strong, the dead body of the moth from the wings of which had come the dust. At last, between the wall railing and table edge she had found the singed body where it had rolled in its dying struggles after the first fall from the flames of the jet to the trigger of the weapon below.

The glass jar with the flame-blackened body of the big moth was displayed, and the crowd held its breath. The story was unbelievable at first thought, and yet—— The defense had shown beyond question that the dead man feared attack and kept the weapon on his desk in a certain position. Fearing Blackton or an agent, he might have cocked the weapon. Allowing that fact, the story was not impossible, for the Italian moth of which this was a specimen is much larger than the commoner varieties.

The district attorney was on his feet again, eager to avenge the rebukes of court and audience, but his scathing cross-examination merely strengthened the prisoner's case, for, question and bully as he would, he failed to weaken the evidence of the girl. True, he brought to light many things. That she had quarreled with her uncle over property that he had controlled, that she doubted his honesty and business methods, and to secure first-hand knowledge of his doings had herself worked under another name for a rival road, part of the time under her uncle's own spy.

Some of the admissions he forced from her were damaging to her judgment, perhaps, but none was damaging to her honesty or devotion to the man for whose sake she fought. The dullest-witted of the audience could feel the romance, shared her feelings at Blackton's rough words in the Serena, and rejoiced with her when accident revealed to her the coal-mine story and her ownership of the lands—property which she had forced her uncle to turn back to her personal management.

The jury did not leave the courtroom, and when the words were uttered that made the prisoner once more free, his eyes met those of the principal witness for the defense in a long look that was an embrace and caress.

It was a very quiet wedding that followed the trial's sensational ending. Convention decreed that it should be so, but there was little that was quiet about the reception accorded the manager and his bride when, two weeks later, they alighted from their car at the dingy old headquarters building and walked to the steps up which both had climbed so many times in the past.

They were all present, clerks, shop men, yard and road men; all, that is, except the bitterly disappointed few whose runs took them out of the city. Ole Skogland declared himself spokesman.

"We fallars are glad you ban har, an' we are glad we ban har, Maestar and Maestress Blackton."

The End.

* * *

Excitement in Town

Our town was quite lively last Thursday fer about thirty minutes. Sumtimes I think th' power of th' press is greatly underestimated. Sam Swan, who runs th' Advocate and does job printin', was th' cause of th' temporary perkin' up of th' village—that is, Sam was th' instrument of th' uplift, anyhow.

Yew see, Sam, unlike most editors, owns two pairs of trousers, th' ones he is a-wearin' and a winter pair that he'd left hangin' about in th' shed behindt th' Advocate office. Well, with th' first touch of frost, Sam begin tew remember them heavy trousers, and yisterday mornin' bright and early, before th' lady typesetter had cum down, Sam builds up a nice, brisk fire in th' office stove and goes out and hauls in them warm, comfortable pants that's been restin' all summer, and puts 'em on. Then he stands with his back tew th' stove and prepares to git well toasted.

Gist about then things begin tew happen. Yew see, durin', th' summer sum pesky hornets hed found Sam's trousers and had made a nest in th' pistol pocket of same. When th' cold weather cum, they was still hangin' onto their summer quarters—chilled, but merely sleepin', as Sam discovered when he backed up tew th' stove.

Sam felt sumthin' kinda hot stickin' him, gently at first, and then—all tew oncet he shot out of that printin' office with a yell yew could of heard above a hull flock of circus calliopes tootin' up Main St.

Fer about fifteen minutes there wuz more fireworks on our principal bullyvard than there wuz last Fourth, when th' celebration took fire and went off by mistake. If Sam had swallered all the red pepper this side of Baltuff's grocery store and set down on a package of red-hot needles, he couldn't a-been more excited.

"Save me!" he bawled, rushin' intew th' Boston Emporium, slappin' hissef about fourteen inches spirally eround from his watchfob. "Save me!"

Mandy Hickson wuz gist cummin' out of th' store, with four dozen fresh eggs at 78 cents a dozen, when Sam headed in, and in about a minute Mandy and Sam and th' hornets wuz all mixed up in th' scrambled eggs. Mandy couldn't help herself much on account of her stylishness in wearin' a slit skirt, and when Sam managed to assume a perpendicular position, he slipped in th' yolks and went head fust into th' showcase, amongst th' caramels and candy hearts.

Ike Rubenstein, th' proprietor, let a whoop out of him that would a-scared a wooden Indian away from his post in front of a cigar store, and started to haul Sam out of th' showcase by th' hind leg. This made th' hornets madder than ever, and they divided their forces and took after Rubenstein and his dog. Th' dog went straight thru th' plate-glass front, and Rubenstein, cryin' like a baby and hollerin', "Fire!" made a dash for th' rear door and fell thru th' open hatch intew th' rutabaga bin in th' cellar, tearin' his clothes and mussin' up th' place in general.

In about a minute Squire Fassbender and Parson Schoat cum a-runnin' frum different directions—and in less'n that time they started off agin, wavin' their arms and a-slappin' themselves like a hull flock of geese sassin' a book agent.

All this time Sam was a-jumpin' up and down, a-floppin' his arms and yellin'. Then he made a scoot fer th' back door of th' Advocate office, and gittin' inside, grabbed up his summer trousers. Gist as he wuz about t' shuck off th' inhabited ones, in walks th' lady typesetter, and Sam, half cussin' and half cryin', dashed out agin, carryin' his summer pants behind him like an automobile pennant flutterin' in th' wind. Where he wuz a-goin' or what he wuz a-goin' t' do, he didn't know; but gist then th' office devil yelled out after him,

"Sam, th' typesetter hez fainted!"

"P-p-put a hornet in her pocket!" yelled Sam over his shoulder, as he turned th' bank corner, a-headin' fer th' river.

When Sam cum up th' seventh time, th' last hornet hed gone away—mad as usual and not half satisfied. Then Sam crawled out on th' bank and changed his trousers, feelin' gently of hisself on th' raised places meanwhile.

By th' time th' Fire Department reached th' scene Sam hed all th' fire stamped out of his pistol pocket, but there was plenty left, so he sed, where th' pesky varmints had hit him with their javelins.

"Pride goeth before a fall," he printed in th' Advocate yesterday. "I oughta known better'n tew have had two pairs of pants. None of th' best editors does."
—Judge.

* * *

Looked Good.

"How glad I am," purred the visitor, "that your daughter has made such an excellent match."

Mrs. Strag smiled, in the gratified manner of a successful campaigner.

"Yes, Madge has married well—very well," she answered complacently.

"But what a pity," pursued she of the catty instinct, "that he has such a peculiar name—Fussenmuck, isn't it?" she queried, innocently.

"I haven't thought about the sound of it," declared Mrs. S., whose finer feelings had been eradicated in the struggle for existence, "but I know that it's got a perfectly beautiful appearance on a check."

* * *

No Difference.

After witnessing the wonderful performance of a blind pianist, one Irishman remarked to another:

"Be the powers that's the best music I ever heard with me two ears."

"He does pretty well for a blind man, doesn't he?"

"He does, indeed, but I was just thinking of wan thing."

"What's that?"

"It wouldn't make a difference to him if he wasn't blind."

"Why not?"

"Well, I was watchin' him all the evenin' and he never looks at the piano, anyhow."

* * *

Not Coming.

A Highlandman from Tobermory asked the price of a railway ticket from Oban to Killin of the clerk at the Oban railway station

"So much," replied the clerk.

"Hoot awa," replied Donald; "it's far ower dear! I'd rather walk!" And off he started.

He had not proceeded far when the train came tearing along, whistling as it neared a station

"Ye needna whistle for me!" said Donald. "I made ye an offer aince, and ye wanna tak' it; sae ye can gang on. I'm no comin'."

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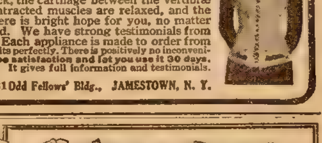
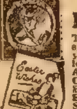
Easter Wishes





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The first figure of the above two lines is a word; the next four figures spell a word; the next two figures spell a word, the last ten spell another word. These four words form a sentence which will interest you. This most interesting puzzle can be solved with a little study as follows. There are twenty-six letters in the alphabet and we have used figures in spelling the four words instead of letters. Letter A is number 1, B number 2, C number 3, etc., throughout the alphabet. **IF YOU CAN SPELL OUT THESE FOUR WORDS WE WILL SEND YOU A SURPRISE OUTFIT CONTAINING A BEAUTIFUL ASSORTMENT OF 40 EASTER SEALS, MOTTO STAMPS, TAGS, ETC., ALL EMBOSSED IN COLORS AND BEAUTIFUL EXAMPLES OF THE LATEST EASTER DESIGNS.** All you have to do is to inclose with your answer 3 two-cent stamps to cover cost of packing, mailing, etc. Try and make out the four words, **ACT QUICKLY.** Write the four words on a slip of paper, mail it immediately with your name and address and 6 cents in stamps. And you will promptly receive as your reward this **SURPRISE PACKET,** which is a handsome assortment of 40 TAGS, SEALS, MOTTO STAMPS, etc., enough for all your Easter letters. Answer at once. Address,

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The Outlaw Horse

Or, Taming Wildfire

By Arthur Chapman

AMOS, I have just had a telephone call from the L-Seven ranch that the roundup passed there and ought to be here in an hour. Do you want to ride out and meet the outfit?"

Seth Clinton, a prosperous Wyoming cattleman, was saddling a horse in the entrance to the big barn of his Three-Bar ranch, and addressed his remark to his oldest boy, a stout lad of fourteen, who had ridden in with two or three horses from a nearby pasture, and was coming to put up his own wiry little bronco after turning the other animals in the corral.

"I should say yes!" exclaimed Amos. "They ought to be about at Dry Creek now. We can meet them at Crazy Woman gulch if we hurry."

The coming of the roundup outfit was an annual event in the eyes of Amos. Every fall he had watched the gathering of the cowboys, who had carried on the roundup work for an immense district. The association roundup was a community affair. Each ranch in the district was represented in proportion to the number of cattle running the range under its brand. It was a big honor to be one of the "top hands" chosen to represent the ranches on the roundup. Every ranch contributed its share of broncos to the "cavvy" or band of saddle horses, and shared in the general expense of the roundup.

The year before Amos had gone with the roundup as helper to the cook, for everybody in the outfit was supposed to work. This year, however, a sprained ankle had kept him at home. He had watched his father's "top hands" depart, riding easily and gracefully on their snorting broncos, followed by pack animals carrying blankets and tarpaulins, while the saddle horses to be contributed to the "cavvy" were driven on ahead. Amos had cried as he looked out of his bedroom window and saw the departure. He fretted during his weeks of confinement to the house, and each day he figured out where the roundup outfit would be in the vast, unfenced plateau land where the ranchers allowed their livestock to roam with only two inspections a year. In the spring the calves on the range were rounded up and branded, but the big roundup in the fall, when the beef steers were gathered and trailed to the nearest railroad point for shipment to market, was the chief delight of Amos. His ankle was well again, but his father had decided that the roundup was too nearly over for him to join it, so Amos had been spending his days waiting with increasing anxiety for any word as to the return of the outfit.

The L-Seven ranch was the first to be passed by the roundup outfit on its return. The "top hands" from that ranch dropped out there, with their horses, and the same process would be kept up until the outfit had entirely disbanded. The Three-Bar was the next ranch on the road. Ed Grimes and Joe Flint, both marvelous riders and ropers, would drop out of the cavalcade at the Three-Bar, and Amos was eager to meet these men, who had been employed for years on the ranch, and to learn of their experiences.

The Three-Bar was one of the largest cattle ranches in Wyoming. Besides the thousands of acres included in the ranch itself, the elder Clinton had access to vast tracts of leased land in adjoining National Forests and on a nearby Indian Reservation. Automobiles were just coming into general use, and there were two machines on the Clinton ranch, but the elder Clinton and his son preferred the saddle for their own pleasure. Both were skilled riders and the ranch hands for miles around had frequently prophesied that Amos was going to make a champion "bronco buster."

"That boy sure has a way with him when it comes to hosses," averred Joe Flint, holder of several trophies won against all comers at Cheyenne. "But the best part of it is, Mr. Clinton, Amos is gentle with four-legged critters. I never had no use for bronco busters that prefer to half kill a hoss in takin' the top off him, when they might spend a little more time and do a better job by usin' gentle methods. Amos ain't goin' to be one of the kind that goes whoopin' into a corral, swingin' a rope and actin' like a Sioux on the warpath and gettin' a bunch wild with fear right at the start. I've showed him how he can get a bridle on most hosses without puttin' a rope to them, merely by keepin' quiet and usin' soothin' talk. But when he has the leather on and has a buck-jumper under him, that boy never lets daylight come between him and his saddle."

A brisk ride of a dozen miles brought Amos and his father to the roundup outfit, which was just starting out after a hasty dinner in Crazy Woman gulch. The outfit made a picturesque sight on the broad, cactus-dotted plains, the white top of the mess wagon shining like a sail on a brown ocean. Slim, the cook, was getting the dishes back in place in the mess wagon. The cowpunchers were all ready to start, and were engaging in rough antics while waiting for Slim to get ready. At sight of the Clintons half a dozen of the men leaped into the saddles and came at full swing, with shrill yells, to meet the newcomers.

One of the advance guard was Joe Flint, and as all stopped their swift horses in a cloud of dust and crowded about the Clintons to shake hands, the bronzed bronco buster imparted an interesting bit of information.

"We've sure picked up a world-beater of a buckin' hoss out on the range," he said, while the other cowboys nodded in unison. "He's a big black fellow, about four years old, that's been dodgin' the roundups in some way till this year. Shorty McGeehan managed to get a rope on him and bring him in. There ain't a sign of a brand on him to show whose hoss he is, but there's the blood of real hosses in that animal."

"He's blooded all right," chimed in Ed Grimes. "He's big and rangy, and he's got weight as well as speed. And when it comes to buckin' he's got more tricks than all the Wild West show posses that was ever got together."

This information was confirmed by Ben Sanford, foreman, a bluff, pleasant-faced rancher who always had charge of the roundup affairs of the district.

"Just come over to the horse cavvy and take a look at the animal," said Ben. "I'll admit I never saw such a horse for kicking. The boys believe he'll be a great card at the next show at Cheyenne. He's thrown every man in this outfit, and not a man in the crowd is afraid of anything cased in horsehide. But this horse has 'em all beaten."

Much interested, Amos and his father rode over with Sanford and the rest of the cowboys to the horse cavvy, where forty or fifty saddle horses were in charge of two day herders. From this band of saddle horses each cowboy was accustomed to choose fresh mounts. The hard work of "riding circle" on the roundup, gathering up the half-wild cattle, soon tired the horses, and it was necessary for each rider to have at least five or six mounts.

In the horse herd was Wildfire, as the new find had been christened, a big, nervous black horse, with rolling eyes and red nostrils and with defiance in the toss of his head and the shrill neigh which he uttered from time to time.

"That's him, and he's sure an outlaw," said Shorty McGeehan. "He fought me like a demon when I roped him, but I never paid much attention to such monkeyshines and just thought he'd make a nice, spirited saddle hoss to take the place of my gray that has a sore back. I saddled him up the next morning, after a little rastle, and thought I'd break him in and use him as part of my saddle string. I've had lots of harder fights getting the saddle on hosses not half so bad at heart. But I no sooner got my feet in the stirrups than I was tossed out in the sagebrush just like Slim might toss a biscuit off the chuck wagon. I tried again, and the hoss done the trick once more. The rest of the gang was laughin' at me, and I told them to take a try. Well, that black hoss tossed the best men in the outfit, includin' Joe here, who has two State championship medals and who ain't beginnin' to go back as a rider."

"I think we'd better leave the outlaw at your ranch," said Ben, as the roundup started on its way after the inspection of the black horse. "You just let him run out in that big pasture where we can get him when we want him, and when this next show is put on in Cheyenne we'll jest see that Wildfire is entered among the bucking horses. There's a big surprise coming to the cowpunchers who think they can ride. I can see where the best of them are going to be tossed higher than dad ever hung bacon."

Amos looked back at the horse cavvy, which was raising a tremendous dust in the road behind the outfit. The big black horse was trotting along in the bunch, apparently serene in his own power. The animal had made no attempt to escape since being caught. Evidently it was secure in the consciousness that it was able to unseat any cowboy who might dare attempt to bestride that glossy back.

When the outfit passed the Three-Bar ranch, Joe Flint and Ed Grimes noosed the big black horse, after the customary rope corral had been put about the cavvy to keep the animals from scattering. The animal was led thru the ranch yard to the big pasture, and was turned out among a score of other horses feeding there. The roundup went on and was disbanded, and Ben Sanford's parting words were:

"We don't want that bad horse for a month yet. But you want to be sure to come to Cheyenne, Mr. Clinton, and see the fun when all these crack riders of the West try to ride him."

The elder Clinton smiled and said goodby and then proceeded to forget all about the existence of the big black horse. But Amos, who had been strangely thrilled at the first sight of the wonderful horse, could not get the picture of Wildfire out of his mind.

One bright fall morning, shortly after the brief visit of the roundup, Amos rode out to the big pasture. There were some oats in a nosebag at his saddle horn. After he had replaced the bars at the pasture gate he looked around for the bucking horse. He located the animal at the other end of the pasture, apart from the other horses and gazing intently across the plains toward the distant purple mountains. The fresh breeze stirred the horse's mane and long tail, and Amos thought he never had seen a lovelier picture. As he rode toward the outlaw horse, the animal started away. Amos increased his speed, and soon he was chasing the black horse about the pasture, but always working the animal toward a corral at the lower part of the

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huge inclosure. The bars were down, and, after finding himself cornered, the wild horse entered the corral, snorting and looking with suspicious eyes upon his pursuer.

Amos dismounted at the gate and boldly entered the corral with the nosebag in his hand. He put up the corral bars, his heart thumping as he did so. It might be that the horse was what was known as a "man killer" and would rush at him and attempt to kick him to death. Amos warily kept close to the fence, so that he could make his escape in the event of such an attack. He soon found, however, that the outlaw horse was not inclined to force an attack, and was chiefly occupied with a desire to keep at a distance. Amos boldly crossed the corral and approached closer. The horse wheeled suddenly and darted around the corral to the other side, where it stood watching Amos suspiciously. The boy repeated the move again and again, and noticed that each time he could get a little nearer the outlaw. Then he dumped the contents of the nosebag into his hat, and extended his hand toward the horse. The animal snorted, and Amos craftily spilled a little of the oats on the ground and then drew away. The horse cautiously approached the oats and ate them.. This was repeated several times, and then Amos let down the bars and returned home, satisfied with the lesson for the day

Amos' visit to the big pasture was repeated in such fashion for a week. At the end of that time the big black horse was eating oats out of his hat. The horse, at Amos' appearance, would trot to the corral, and whinny with delight at the prospect of the feast he knew was coming. Amos ventured to reach forth his other hand and stroke the animal's velvety muzzle, at the same time speaking caressingly to him. Then he petted the horse's head and neck, and inside of two or three days the outlaw would stand still while Amos stroked his back and smoothed his mane. At the slightest false move the animal would dart away, but patiently Amos worked, determined that he was not to be balked in winning the horse's affections

One morning Amos took his saddle from his own bronco and brought it into the corral. Then, after the outlaw had come for his oats, Amos attempted to adjust what is known as a hackamore, which is used in lieu of a bridle in breaking wild horses. The first efforts were dismal failures, but Amos persisted, and finally the big horse was bridled. Then an attempt was made to slide the saddle blanket over the wild horse's back. A dozen times the outlaw danced away, snorting, but finally stood still while the blanket was carefully adjusted

Getting the saddle on was a different matter, and it was three days before the black horse allowed the leather to rest across his back. Amos' heart beat considerably faster than its wont as he reached under the horse and secured the cinch strap and gently adjusted it and began to pull. At the first tightening the big creature looked around with his ears back, but finally concluded to let the performance go on. It was different from the time the rough cowboy had flung the saddle upon him, and the horse concluded to let this gentle boy have his way, at least for a while

With saddle and bridle on, Amos felt that his battle was more than half won. He had helped in many a battle to saddle fractious horses, some of which had to be thrown heels over head at the snubbing post. Now, single-handed and without the use of a rope, he had managed to finish all the preliminary preparations, and the worst horse of the open range stood ready for the final test of riding.

Would the horse become a fighting demon at the instant Amos climbed on his back? Would all the lessons of the previous days in the corral be forgotten, and would Amos be flung, like the other would-be riders of Wildfire? If the big animal concluded to resist, there was none at hand to help. It would have to be a duel, with boy and horse alone in a corral, beyond sight and hearing of those at the ranch.

Amos did not hesitate, tho he was pale as he put his left foot in the stirrup. With his left hand he grasped the reins close to the creature's head, so the horse could not reach around and bite, and, with his right hand encircling the saddle horn, he pivoted into the saddle with the easy, graceful motion which only Western saddlemen acquire.

As Amos' right foot slipped into the opposite stirrup, and he relaxed his muscles for the pitching bound that might come, a tremor ran thru the frame of the big horse. For an instant Amos thought the battle was about to start. But there came no furious bucking. Instead, the black horse walked forward a few feet and dug his muzzle into the nosebag, which was half full of oats. Amos, with a chant of triumph running thru his mind, let the big horse have his way. For half an hour he sat in the saddle, scarcely daring to move. He talked soothingly to the big animal, which walked here and there around the corral, now and then nibbling at the grass that could be reached thru the lower bars. Then Amos ventured to pull gently on the reins. The big horse's head came up and the lad urged him forward. The horse broke into a gentle trot, around the corral. Amos almost shouted aloud in joy. Then he stopped the horse, and, after opening the corral gate, swung boldly into the saddle, and the big black trotted out into the pasture and broke into a long, easy canter and then into a wild, free gallop, as Amos swung his hat and began to sing:

"The big black bear came down the mountain.
The big black bear came down the mountain,
The big black bear came down the mountain,
Long time ago''

A few days later Ben Sanford, accompanied by two or three cowpunchers from the JW ranch, clattered into the ranch yard of the Three-Bar, and announced to Mr. Clinton that they had come for the bucking horse out in the big pasture.

"There's going to be a show at Cheyenne next week," said Ben. "The Cheyenne newspapers have had the story about this bucking horse that has tossed all the champions in this roundup district, and we're going to ship Wildfire off tomorrow. The champion of the Northwest States is going to have a whirl at him, and you can bet we're all going down to see him pull the horn off his saddle and git throwed to boot."

"Let me go and bring him in," interposed Amos. "I know right where the horse is."

Nothing averse to loafing half an hour as a preliminary to dinner, the cowboys grouped themselves in the shade around the ranch yard, while Ben and Mr. Clinton inspected some new blooded livestock that had just arrived. Amos saddled his bronco and cantered off toward the big pasture.

Fifteen minutes later Ed Grimes let out a whoop that attracted the attention of every one on the ranch.

"Look what's comin'!" he yelled. "It's Amos ridin' that mad horse! Get in your saddles, boys, and haze that critter or he'll pitch that boy and kill him!"

The cowpunchers leaped for their horses, preparatory to riding in close formation around the black horse, thus preventing full play for bucking—but it turned out that no hazing was necessary

Amos rode thru the gate into the yard at an easy lope, and with the big horse under perfect control. A light touch on the reins brought the animal to a standstill in front of Mr. Clinton and the astounded cowpunchers. Swinging out of the saddle Amos stood and faced the crowd smilingly

"You can win any race with this horse," said Amos, "but he has promised me he is never going to buck any more."

"What does this mean, Amos?" demanded Mr. Clinton. "Have you had somebody break this horse?"

"No," said Amos. "Nobody had to break him. I just got him out of the fighting habit by treating him kindly. And as long as I ride him he never will buck again. I can't answer for what will happen if any of you men get on him, tho. I want to have you buy this horse for me, father. If he's sent to Cheyenne he will get to bucking again and his disposition will be spoiled, and he will never be any good to any one. If I can keep him here, he will make the finest saddle horse in this part of the State."

"I allus told you that kid was a born horseman," said Joe Flint, proudly. "I must say that this beats me, tho—this thing of a boy winnin' the confidence of a critter like that."

"Why, when I rode that outlaw hoss and got throwed for my pains," averred Ed Grimes. "I could feel the meanness in him bubblin' jest like water in a steam-b'iler. And now look at him, standin' there like one of them there down-East hoss show entries that the women ride!"

"Well, Amos," said Mr. Clinton, "I guess you'll have to have that horse if we can get him. How much do you think he is worth to the association?" he asked of Ben Sanford

"Well, I don't think that animal is worth a cent to the association right now," said Ben slowly. "Nobody else can ride him but Amos, and to spoil a good saddle horse just to make a bucker out of him would be a crime. It looks as if he's Amos' horse by right, as he stands. I guess we'll just have to forget that we ever picked up that unbranded 4-year-old on the range. Amos, let's see you ride your horse a little more. We jest want to look on and try to profit by your example. You've brought home to us what we too often forget, that kindness goes a long ways farther than anything else towards taming animals."

* * *

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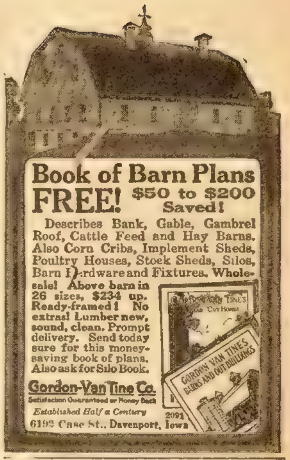
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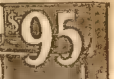

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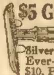

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THE FAIRY CORNER

ADMIRED WASHINGTON.

The pupils at the high school at Lynde had a holiday February 22d. Their teacher, Miss Fedrick, told the boys and girls of the history class to find out as much as possible about the character and deeds of George Washington before February 21st. Then the last hour in the afternoon, just before adjourning over for the holiday, each should tell the class what he or she regarded as most admirable in the Father of His Country. They met according to agreement. Alice Wetherill said:

"I admire General Washington most because he was a great and splendid soldier and led his troops to victory with wretchedly inadequate means.

"At Monmouth, N. J., June 28, 1778—that is the grandest of all! The soldiers of the American advance were flying back on the main army like a lot of frightened chickens, the general who commanded them the most scared of all, when George galloped up and in a voice of thunder roared at the general and his men, telling them to form again and turn their faces to the enemy and fight, fight! In a few minutes, just by the power he had in himself, Washington changed those cowards into heroes, and they fought and won. It was glorious!"

Alice Wetherill wrote poetry, and she had great eyes that flashed while she said, "It was glorious!" and the class applauded her. Then Norman Hartley said:

"I think George Washington was greatest of all as a statesman. In his farewell address he said: ''Tis our true policy to steer clear of permanent alliances with any portion of the foreign world.' Senator Holdfast says that advice of Washington has held our country together and made it great."

Then spoke Billy Riggs, a parrot-like little boy, who always said what he thought the teacher wanted him to say:

"I admire George Washington most because he couldn't tell a lie."

Then some of the class laughed, but one of the other girls said:

"I too, admire George Washington because he always told the truth. But I don't believe he couldn't tell a lie. Anybody can tell a lie. It's the people who can but won't that are to be praised. I am sure a man so great as Washington could have told a lie, but he would not, and that made him all the greater."

Next Tommy Quigg, a boy who liked to play ball better than to study, remarked:

"I admire Washington because he took the lead in all athletic sports."

Some of the class laughed again, but the teacher told them Tommy was not far wrong, because if the Father of His Country had not built up his constitution by plenty of open air exercise in youth he never could have endured the hardships of the American Revolution.

Mary Murphy said: "I admire George Washington because he was 'first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen,'" and all the class applauded heartily. After that a little girl observed that she admired Washington because he was so fine and splendid and chivalrous always toward ladies, that he did not even talk back when his wife lectured him. At that the class smiled again, tho the little girl could not tell why. Next they asked the teacher to tell them what she liked best in the character of the first President. Miss Fedrick said:

"Aside from his all-around greatness, I admire Washington most of all for his modesty. Twice he was elected President, accepting the nomination each time only because his countrymen called him and altogether against his own wishes. His heart's desire was to live in quiet at Mount Vernon and rear improved farm animals. The second time he was chosen he protested almost with tears against being kept away longer from his beloved country home."

MUSLIN HORSES.

"I'll play a game of steeplechase with you, daddy," said Harold, pushing his books aside and drawing near the end of the table where his father sat reading the evening paper.

"Your history lesson, dear," suggested his mother. "Don't forget that."

"Oh, it is on George Washington, mother; I know all about him—there's nothing new to find out about him."

Daddy's eyes twinkled. "I'm ready, my son," he said. "Choose your horses for the game. By the way, those were fine 'muslin' horses General Washington had."

"What kind of horses?" asked Harold.

"Why, I thought you knew all about him, sonny."

"You know something I don't," admitted Harold. "Tell us, daddy."

"Well," began his father, "General Washington was always fond of horses. His stables were kept in apple-pie order. His coaches were excellent. For many years there existed great rivalry between the grays of a certain aristocratic Virginian, Colonel Byrd, and the bays of Colonel Washington, as he was then.

"These bays were called 'muslin' horses for the reason that every morning at cock crow the hostlers had to tumble out of their beds and start to work on the equines. At sunrise, Bishop, the master of Washington's stables, would appear with a spotless white handkerchief in his hand and would rub the horses' coats with it. Woe be to the boys if the handkerchief showed the suspicion of a stain! If so, they were soundly trounced, for Bishop had been raised under the stern discipline of the European armies, and a breach of duty was never overlooked.

"I will tell you of some beautiful white horses that were the property of Washington when he was President. The seat of the nation at that time was in Philadelphia. The stables were in charge of a man called 'German John.' The night before these horses were to be used they were entirely covered with a paste of whiting. They were then wrapped in cloths and left to sleep on clean straw. In the morning this preparation was, of course, hard. It was well rubbed in, and the horses were curried and brushed. Their coats were then beautiful and shining like satin. Their mouths were washed, their teeth picked and cleaned, their hoofs blacked and saddle cloths of leopard skins carefully arranged."

"I wish I could have seen those 'muslin' horses and the white ones, too," remarked Harold. "Can't you tell something more about Washington's horses, daddy?"

"The horses that General Washington rode in the war for independence were magnificent," continued his father. "The name of the one he rode when he received the sword of the defeated Cornwallis was Nelson, called so after the patriotic Governor of Virginia. He was a fine chestnut color, with white legs and face. After the war was ended Nelson was never ridden again. He was turned out to pasture in summer, was well cared for in winter, and caressed and fondled by the hand of his master. He died of old age at Mount Vernon years after the Revolution."

"I think I'll have something new to tell in our history class tomorrow. Thank you, daddy," said Harold.

Daddy smiled and they began their game.

"Oh, papa! This is our birthday! What are you going to give us?"

MARY ELLEN'S TRIUMPH

Spring had come to the country, and as Mary Ellen appeared in the farmhouse door she fairly pranced with happiness, for toward whatever place her beauty-loving eyes roved they met beauty. It was blossom time and the orchard stood a pink-and-white mass against the blue sky, and the fresh green of grass and tree contrasted with the flashing colors of birds.

With a leap as agile as a squirrel's Mary Ellen sprang out into the yard and laughed aloud as a rush of fragrant wind met her tanned face. Hurrying toward the big barn, the warm earth felt comfortable to her bare feet, but when she reached the barnyard, where so many miscellaneous articles were scattered about, more careful stepping was necessary and it was punctuated with "Ohs!" of pain, as the tender flesh met strange objects.

"Mary Ellen's barn," as the neighbors called it, was the Mecca for all the children thereabouts, on account of its adaptation to all kinds of games. Just now the big mows were still half full of hay, and on rainy days they offered a splendid opportunity for daring acrobatic feats.

Mary Ellen's brother David and his chum were seated just inside the door sorting a number of small objects, which they thrust behind them at the girl's approach, but Mary Ellen's eyes were keen, and she danced toward the boys gayly as she exclaimed: "Oh, Dave, you're going to play marbles! I'm just in time to beat you both. Let's make the ring right here in this level space."

Now perhaps the fact that Mary Ellen could beat any boy in the neighborhood had something to do with it—and then Dave's chum had just declared himself averse to playing with girls—at any rate Dave answered:

"Now, Mary Ellen, you can't play with us, 'cause girls ain't 'sposed to play marbles. You go 'long and play with your dolls."

All the joy fled from his sister's face, and such a hurt look filled her brown eyes that David's soft heart was instantly touched and he opened his lips to recall his decision, but Mary Ellen's small head was flung up proudly, and away she went with the retort:

"Keep your old marbles, smarties! You know I could get them and that's why you won't let me play. I hope you'll lose every one of 'em." And with misty eyes and a catch in her throat Mary Ellen ran on and on till she reached her own private nook in the orchard—a seat formed by a network of limbs and branches high up in a gnarled apple tree.

For a few moments she lay there, and by this time she was sobbing, but soon the gentle swaying of the blossom-laden boughs about her and the twittering of the nesting birds soothed her restless feelings as nothing else could, for Mary Ellen was instinctively in tune with the great outdoors and her heart responded to its every call.

But rebellious thoughts surged over her and again the tears came, only to be dashed away with a fierce hand. "Why, oh, why, did she have to be a girl? A girl couldn't do anything at all! Everything was unjust and unfair!"

Then Mary Ellen fled again, this time to the one who could comfort all her sorrows, the sweet gentle mother of the household, and in a few minutes she was telling her story with her head in her mother's lap. As Mrs. Carson listened her eyes filled with a reminiscent look, half smiling and half sad, for she was looking back into the past, and she saw there another small girl who had sobbed out her rebellion against established precedent and all in vain.

"Never mind, little girl," she comforted. "I know how you feel about it, but it's the way of the world. Just you wait, tho; some day you can make them sorry"—this last with a humorous twist of her mouth that Mary Ellen did not understand.

But she was comforted by the assurance of her mother's sympathy, and she was soon playing happily, the incident all but forgotten. An hour later her name was called again and again, and as she rushed up the steps she was met by a shining-eyed mother.

"Oh, Mary Ellen," her mother cried, "hurry! Come and see what your Aunt Mary has sent you! You never can guess what it is."

There spread out on Mary Ellen's bed was a lovely rose-colored dress of sheer, soft material, a hair ribbon and socks of the same shade, and a pair of dainty white sandals, laced with ribbon. The owner of all this splendor stood spellbound in her delight, for tho Mary Ellen had never paid much attention to her clothes except to see that there weren't too many of them, now the age-old feminine desire for loveliness rose in her.

The next day was Sunday and she was decked out in her new finery for Sunday school, her mother's artistic eye delighting in the picture her dark-eyed little daughter made. Her advent was greeted by a half-suppressed chorus of "Ohs!" and "Ahs!" from the children and as she settled into her seat in church Mary Ellen felt a thrill of triumph at the eyes of admiration that were fixed upon her. It is to be feared that she was not altogether reverent that morning, distracted as was her mind, and as soon as the service was over she started away toward home.

Presently she heard running footsteps behind her, and, turning, she saw Dick Wolsey, Dave's chum and her sworn enemy, so Mary Ellen turned up her small nose and prepared to pass on and ignore him. But she was stopped by a pleading voice:

"Don't be mad, Mary Ellen. I'm sorry I was mean to you and teased you, 'cause—'cause I think you look bully, an' I—I like you!"

Quite breathless after this declaration, the small swain stood twisting his hat, not knowing which way to look in his embarrassment, until his lady relented and smiled upon him. "An' won't you play marbles with us tomorrow?" he continued, forgetful of recent incidents

But Mary Ellen had not forgotten and she took her revenge.

"Well, maybe," she said, tantalizingly, "if you will play fair, and not just be easy with me because I'm a girl." Then, having accepted a bag of candy with an air she thought appropriate, she further enthralled her enemy by a brilliant smile she threw over her shoulder as she passed along.

Mary Ellen had come into her own.

HER LIMIT.

Little Jennie was spending a holiday with her mother's people on a farm, and everybody made a tremendous fuss about the pretty little 4-year-old.

Aunts, uncles, cousins and mere friends all demanded kisses, and Jennie obliged in every case. Loud were the praises about her sweetness.

Then Uncle Fred picked her up in his strong arms.

"Now, little lass," he said, "I'll take you to see the cow."

Jennie waited till they were out of the house, then she said firmly:

"Uncle Fwed, I s'all not kiss the cow!"

A SHARP CAT.

Little Lester came running to his mother one day with a badly scratched hand.

As mother was administering healing and sympathy she asked.

"Dearie, how did you hurt your hand so badly?"

"Why, mother," replied the little fellow, "I cut it on the cat."

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READERS WEEKLY.

GENTLE JABS

A king in the hand is worth three in the pack.

Old men always know more than they pretend to.

Don't wear clothing loud enough to attract a crowd.

If you sit in a draft the doctor may cash it for you.

Women sometimes feel unworthy of their husbands—in books.

The rattlesnake never shrinks from danger. It simply re-coils.

A genius is a man who can do almost anything but make a living.

Love may not be a disease, but it is frequently of a rash nature.

It is everlastingly too late to pick the winner after the race is over.

It's a good thing [illegible] a temper

The man who knows the least is often in the biggest hurry to tell it.

Here's an epitaph for the bartender: "He had a smile for everybody."

Auctioneers are men who cry because they have to make an honest living.

A wise man knows more than he tells, but a fool tells more than he knows.

Women always think they mean what they say—at the time they let it out.

A woman always jollies a man along, just before she makes a big fool of him.

A married man seldom gets the last word, because of his inability to remain awake.

The man who starts out to look for trouble usually ends by having it thrust upon him.

If all the good had not died young there would be a lot of cranky old people on earth today.

If a man ever wishes he had been born a woman it is when he observes the foolish acts of other men.

Adam had his foibles, but the records fail to indicate that he was ever guilty of telling fish stories.

No girl can successfully masticate fudge and nurse a case of disappointed love at the same time.

His first love and his first shave are two episodes in every young man's career that he never forgets.

A man may class his wife as a bird of paradise during the honeymoon—and as a parrot later in the game.

The reason a man can't tell the average woman anything is because she would rather talk than listen.

That man has truly reached the limit of perfection who fully deserves the good opinion he has of himself.

The average woman swallows flattery just as a baby swallows buttons—regardless of the trouble that may follow.

Home and Health

FASHION NOTES.

Navy blue is the bread and butter color of the wardrobe.

One sees silk jersey everywhere, and during the last few months it has developed from a mere fancy to a passion.

Princess lines in dress have been bidding for favor all winter, and by spring, it is safe to presume, the elongated waistline will have been accepted.

Charming and inexpensive is the evening frock made of white and colored tulle combined. The skirt is simple, being a full white skirt with the full overskirt of colored tulle.

Red has waked all the fashionable world with its colorful drum beats, and one sees at every evening assemblage any number of sumptuous velvet wraps of the geranium's own bright crimson.

A stylish costume consists of a slipover blouse of dark blue satin smocked in the shoulders with white silk and showing novel collar and cuffs of white satin. It is worn with a box-plaited white flannel skirt.

❧

FOR THE HOUSEWIFE.

Shredded cabbage and lettuce hearts with French dressing and roasted peanuts make an excellent salad.

An oblong piece of zinc fastened to one end of the ironing board is a great convenience and time saver. No hunting for the regulation stand and no scorched pad.

Instead of warming cereals in the oven, fill a large corn popper full of flakes and toss it lightly over the heat from the stove. Besides being quicker, there is no possibility of scorching, as is the case when the oven is used.

Garments worn by children should be rendered fireproof by the addition of a little ammonium phosphate to the water in which they are washed. This will not render them absolutely fireproof, but very nearly so.

To clean a white satin hat buy a five-cent block or square of magnesia at the druggist's and rub over the satin. Use plenty of magnesia, covering every bit of hat. Leave for a few days. Then turn the hat upside down and shake off what is loose. If you do not like the appearance of the hat go over it again, [illegible] of magnesia and taking pains to do a good job.

❧

NEEDLEWORK NOTES.

Herewith is given the explanation of certain terms used in sewing:

Shirrings consist of a number of rows of gatherings either on tucked or plain material.

Ruching is made like ruffles, but usually is not wide, and is hemmed on both edges and gathered or pleated in the center.

Seams are bound with a small running stitch, the tape or other binding being held down over the seam edge while sewing.

Cording is made in the same way as shirring or gathering, only the material is folded in tuck effect over a cord and is stitched with a running stitch.

Catstitching forms a sort of seam stitch from left to right, with a short stitch from right to left, having the needle point in the direction opposite to the direction of the thread. The needle is drawn out and the slanting and short stitch continued alternately.

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HEALTH NOTES.

Exercises should be taken night and morning in the privacy of your bedroom; remove all tight clothing and have plenty of fresh air.

Bran baths have a softening effect upon the skin. They are said to be good for nervous people. Ordinary bran may be bought at a feed store and used as desired. A bag of cheesecloth one foot and a half square is filled about as full as an ordinary pine pillow. This may be used twice. It is put into the bath and is thoroly soaked and squeezed until the water is brown and full of bubbles. The water should be quite warm and one stays in the bath only a few minutes. Massage of the entire body following this bath is beneficial in its effects. The bather should rest for at least ten minutes between the bath and massage.

RECIPES.

CREAM SAUCE—Bring to the boiling point one pint of milk, then add three tablespoonfuls of sugar and the well-beaten yolks of three eggs. Cook until the consistency of cream. Remove from the stove and just before serving pour around the individual dishes of cornstarch pudding, taking care that the pudding and sauce are very cold.

EMERGENCY SOUP—Take a can of salmon, drain off the oil and rub the fish thru a sieve. Add one and a half teaspoonfuls of salt to a quart of scalding hot milk, stir in the fish and four tablespoonfuls of flour that has been blended with two tablespoonfuls of the oil from the can; cook until smooth and serve with a dash of red pepper and a sprinkling of minced parsley on the top of each cup. Serve with toasted crackers.

SALAD DRESSING—Eight eggs, one pint of vinegar, one pound of granulated sugar, one pint of whipping cream, one mixing spoonful of salt, one-half teaspoonful of cayenne pepper, two ounces of mustard. Whip cream thoroly, then add sugar, mustard and cayenne, which have been well mixed, then the salt. Beat yolks and whites of eggs thoroly and add the cream and sugar, then last the vinegar, very slowly, beating or stirring all the time. Cook as boiled custard, do not let it turn the boil. When cold bottle in self sealers.

FIG PUDDING—One-half pound figs, two pints milk, three heaping tablespoonfuls cornstarch, two heaping tablespoonfuls sugar, three eggs, one-half teaspoonful lemon extract. Wash the figs, cut them in small pieces, then put them into a buttered casserole dish. Put the cornstarch into a saucepan and moisten it with half a cupful of the milk. Bring the rest of the milk to the boiling point, pour it over the cornstarch and stir till it boils for ten minutes. Add the sugar, lemon extract and the eggs well beaten. Pour over the figs and bake in a moderate oven for a half-hour. Serve with cream or milk.

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Good Advice.

Clergyman (to tattered hobo). "Instead of spending your life wandering about the countryside and sleeping under hedges, why can not you act like a man and go out and fight for your hearth and home?"

ARE YOU AN HEIR?

It is estimated that there are something like 60,000 persons scattered throughout the United States and Canada who are entitled to moneys and lands now tied up in the English high Court of Chancery and elsewhere owing to the inability of lawyers to locate them. The great trouble is that foreign lawyers, when searching for the lost heirs almost invariably advertise for them in London or Edinburg newspapers; as these papers are seldom seen in this country, of course the missing heir never knows of the good fortune that is awaiting him, or her, and thus the case drags along in the Courts for an indefinite time. As an aid to those interested in Chancery cases, and who believe that they are entitled to an inheritance, we publish each month an authentic list of persons who have been advertised for. The list is a very long one and any person can secure a copy by sending a 2-cent stamp to The Spare Moments Pub. Co., Desk 42, Allentown, Pa. ***

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Tarts and Ticklers

Charity.

Bishop Penhurst was talking, in Boston, about charity.

"Some charities," he said, "remind me of the cold, proud, beautiful lady who glittering with diamonds, swept forth from a charity ball at dawn, crossed the frosty sidewalk, and entered her huge limousine.

"A beggar woman whined at the window

"'Could ye give me a trifle for a cup of coffee, lady?'

"The lady looked at the beggar reproachfully:

"'Good gracious!' she said, 'Here you have the nerve to ask me for money when I've been tangoing for you the whole night thru! Home, James!'

"And she snapped the window shut in the beggar's face indignantly."

❧

Why So Many Balls Were Lost.

A young married couple who lived near a famous golf-course were entertaining an elderly aunt from the depths of the country.

"Well, Aunt Mary, how did you spend this afternoon?" asked the hostess on the first day.

"Oh, I enjoyed myself very much," replied Auntie with a beaming smile. "I went for a walk across the fields. There seemed to be a great many people about, and some of them shouted to me in a most eccentric manner, but I just took no notice. And, by the way," she went on, "I found such a number of curious little round white things. I brought them home to ask you what they are."

And the dear old lady produced from her handbag about a dozen golf-balls!

❧

Yankee Fodder.

Senator Hoar used to tell with glee of a Southerner just home from New England who said to his friend, "You know those little white round beans?"

"Yes," replied the friend; "the kind we feed to our horses?"

"The very same. Well, do you know, sir, that in Boston the enlightened citizens take those little white round beans, boil them for three or four hours, mix them with molasses and I know not what other ingredients, bake them, and then—what do you suppose they do with the beans?"

"They——"

"They eat 'em, sir," interrupted the first Southerner impressively; "bless me, sir, they eat 'em!"

❧

A Strategi[illegible]st.

Two youngsters, one the possessor of a permit, were fishing on a certain estate when a gamekeeper suddenly darted from a thicket. The lad with the permit uttered a cry of fright, dropped his rod and ran off at top speed. The gamekeeper was led a swift chase. Then, worn out, the boy halted. The man seized him by the arm and said between pants: "Have you a permit to fish on this estate?"

"Yes, to be sure," said the boy, quietly.

"You have? Then show it to me."

The boy drew the permit from his pocket. The man examined it and frowned in perplexity and anger.

"Why did you run when you had this permit?" he asked.

"To let the other boy get away," was the reply. "He didn't have none."

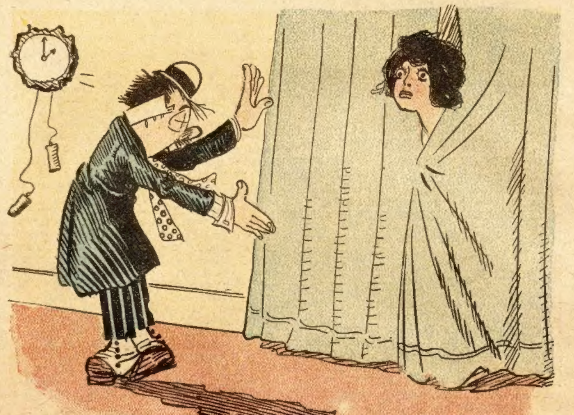
Reason Enough.

Everything in the dear old village seemed the same to Jones after his absence of four years. The old church, the village pump, the ducks on the green, the old men smoking while their wives gossip—it was so restful after the rush and bustle of the city. Suddenly he missed something.

"Where's Hodge's windmill?" he asked in surprise. "I can only see one mill, and there used to be two."

The native gazed thoughtfully round, as if to verify the statement. Then he said slowly:

"They pulled one down. There weren't enough wind for two on 'em."



Wife (2 a. m.)—"What have you to say for yourself, sir? And why are you waving your hands at me in that ridiculous fashion?"
Husband—"I'm only—hic—waiving examination, my dear!"

The Fly in the Ointment.

Mrs. Higgins was an incurable grumbler. She grumbled at everything and every one. But at last the vicar thought he had found something about which she could make no complaint; the old lady's crop of potatoes was certainly the finest for miles round.

"Ah, for once you must be well pleased," he said, with a beaming smile, as he met her in the village street. "Every one's saying how splendid your potatoes are this year."

The old lady glowered at him as she answered:

"They're not so poor. But where's the bad ones for the pigs?"

❧

Perpetual Motion.

Alderman Curran of New York City worked his way thru Yale College. During his course he was kept very busy by the various jobs he did to help with his expenses. On graduation he went to New York, and was even busier than he had been in New Haven.

After some months of life in New York, a friend met him and said, "Henry, what are you doing?"

"I have three jobs," replied Mr. Curran. "I am studying law, I am a newspaper reporter, and I am selling life insurance."

"How do you manage to get it all in?" said the friend.

"Oh," replied Mr. Curran, "that's easy enough. They're only eight-hour jobs."

❧

A Coaxer.

The latest American church device for "raising the wind" is what a religious paper describes as "some collection-box." The inventor hails from Oklahoma. If a member of the congregation drops in a twenty-five-cent piece or a coin of larger value, there is silence. If it is a ten-cent piece a bell rings, a five-cent piece sounds a whistle, and a cent fires a blank cartridge. If any one pretends to be asleep when the box passes, it awakens him with a watchman's rattle, and a kodak takes his portrait.

❧

Safe Deposit.

An old lady, who was sitting on the porch of a hotel at Asheville, North Carolina, where also there were a number of youngsters, was approached by one of them with this query:

"Can you crack nuts?"

The old lady smiled and said: "No, my dear, I can't. I lost all my teeth years ago."

"Then," said the boy, extending two hands full of walnuts, "please hold these while I go and get some more."

Only His Watch So Far.

There is an old negro living in Carrollton who was taken ill several days ago and called a physician of his race to prescribe for him. But the old man did not seem to be getting any better, and finally a white physician was called. Soon after arriving Dr. S. felt the darky's pulse for a moment and then examined his tongue.

"Did your other doctor take your temperature?" he asked.

"I don't know, sah," he answered feebly. "I hadn't missed anything but my watch as yit, boss."

❧

Sensitive.

Here is a story of a London "nut" who had mounted guard for the first time

The colonel had just given him a wigging because of the state of his equipment. A little later the colonel passed his post. The nut did not salute. The indignant colonel turned and passed again. The nut ignored him.

"Why in the qualified blazes don't you salute?" the colonel roared.

"Ah," said the nut, softly, "I fawncied you were vexed with me."

❧

Footing the Bill.

Mr. Newman had just recovered from an operation and was talking to a friend.

"The surgeon," he remarked, "said he'd have me on my feet again in three weeks."

"Well, he did it, didn't he?" asked the friend.

"He did, indeed," responded Mr. Newman. "I had to sell my motor car to pay his bill."

❧

The Better Way.

Charles M. Schwab, congratulated in Pittsburgh on a large war order contract which he had just received from one of the warring nations, said:

"Some people call it luck, but they are mistaken. Whatever success I have is due to hard work and not to luck.

"I remember a New York business man who crossed the ocean with me one winter when the whole country was suffering from hard times.

"'And you, Mr. Schwab,' the New Yorker said, 'are like the rest of us, I suppose, hoping for better things?'

"'No, my friend,' I replied. 'No, I am not hoping for better things. I've got my sleeves rolled up and I'm working for them.'"

❧

Joe's Diagnosis.

A colored man entered the general store of a small Ohio town and complained to the storekeeper that a ham that he had purchased there a few days before had proved not to be good.

"The ham is all right, Joe," insisted the storekeeper.

"No, it ain't, boss," insisted the other. "Dat ham's sure bad."

"How can that be," continued the storekeeper, "when it was cured only last week?"

Joe reflected solemnly a moment, and then suggested:

"Maybe it's done had a relapse."

❧

Getting Even.

James, 4 years old, had been naughty to the point of evoking a whipping from his long-suffering mother, and all day long a desire for revenge rankled in his little bosom.

At length bedtime came, and, kneeling beside her, he implored a blessing on each member of the family individually, his mother alone being conspicuous by her absence. Then, rising from his devout posture, the little suppliant fixed a keenly triumphant look upon her face, saying, as he turned to climb into bed:

"I s'pose you noticed you wasn't in it."

❧

Needless Extravagance.

"No, my 'usband ain't killed, Mrs. Marks. No sooner did I put all the kids in mournin', even to biby in the pram, when I gets a telegram a-sayin' 'e's alive and well. Yes, an' all this expense for nothin'."

"Wot a crool shame!"

❧

Not Filling.

Lady of the House—"You say you haven't had anything to eat today?"

Tramp—"Lady, [illegible]lered today is an insult."

❧ ❧ ❧

IS HE CRAZY?

The owner of a large plantation in Mississippi, where the fine figs grow, is giving away a few five-acre fruit tracts. The only condition is that figs be planted. The owner wants enough figs raised to supply a co-operative canning factory. You can secure five acres and an interest in the canning factory by writing the Eubank Farms Company, 1232 Keystone, Pittsburgh, Pa. They will plant and care for your trees for $6 per month. Your profit should be $1,000 per year. Some think this man is crazy for giving away such valuable land, but there may be method in his madness. ***

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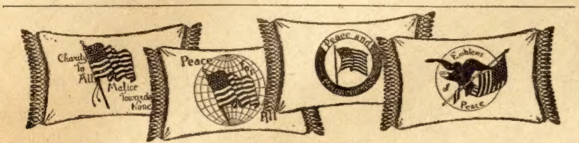

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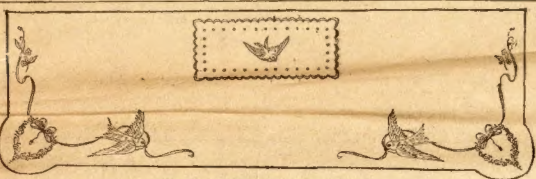

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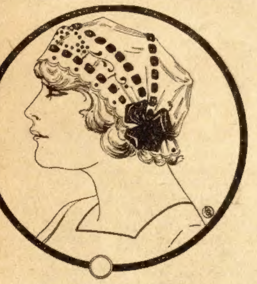

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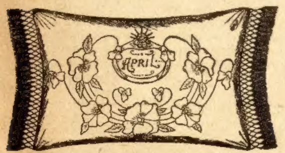

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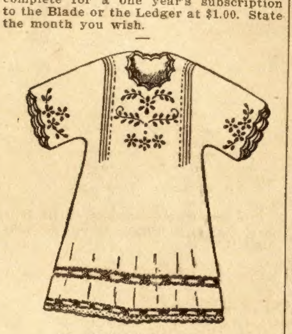
NO. 5060, BIRTH MONTH PILLOW TOP.—The latest and most striking birth month design pillow top you ever saw on 17x21-inch tan ticking. Remember there are no two designs alike in this offer. For instance, if your request is for a "July Birth Month Pillow" it will be tinted in exact colors, symbolic of the birthstone and flower of that month, and so on. We also include in this offer a back and four skeins of colored floss for working design. Your choice of any birth month pillow top complete for a one year's subscription to the Blade or the Ledger at $1.00. State the month you wish.



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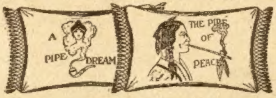

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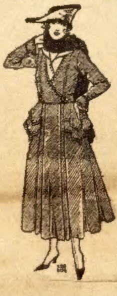

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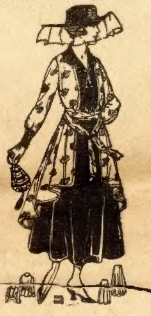

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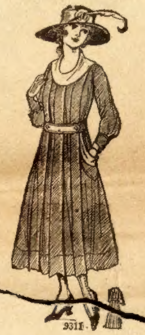

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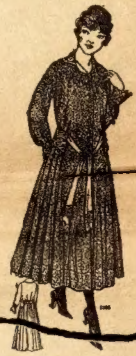

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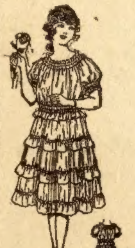

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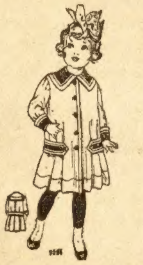

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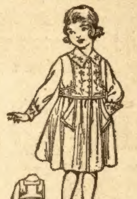

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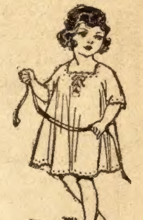

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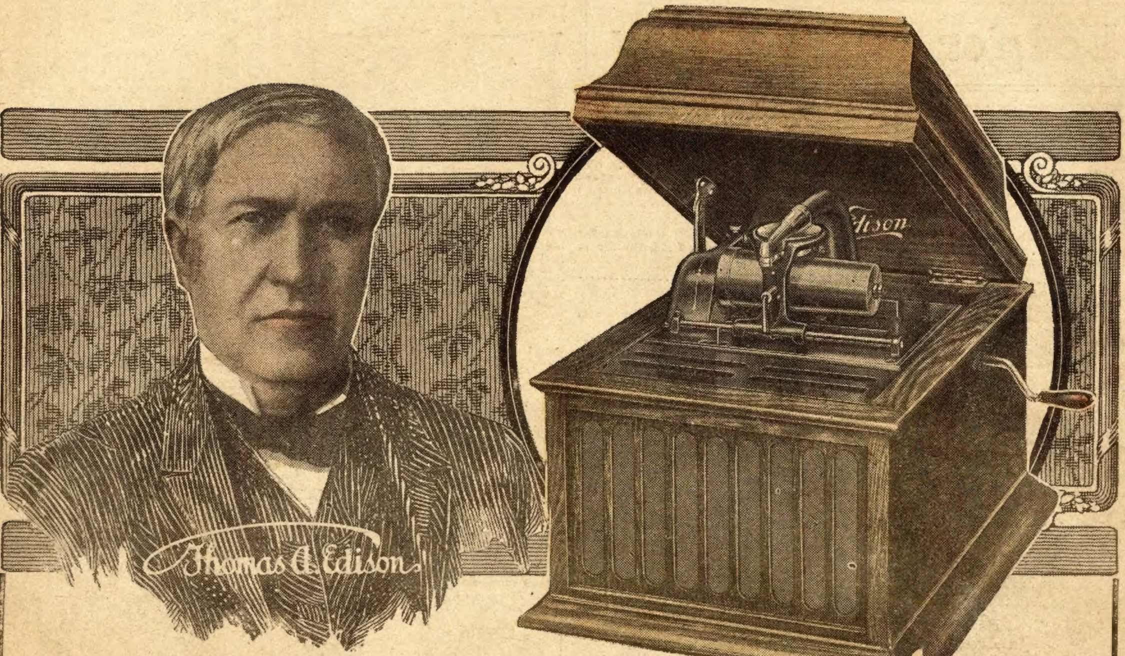

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Think of it—a $1.00 payment, and a few dollars a month to get this outfit of Mr. Edison's new phonograph with the Diamond Stylus reproducer, the life-like music—the same Blue Amberol Records—all the musical results of the highest priced outfits. The *finest*, the *best* that money can buy at very much less than the price at which imitations of the Genuine New Edison are offered.

After years of labor on his favorite invention, Mr. Edison has made the music of the phonograph true to life. There is no reason, now—especially since we make this rock-bottom offer—why you should be satisfied with anything less than Mr. Edison's genuine instrument. You are under no obligation on this free trial offer. **Hear the New Edison in your own home before you decide.**

Send No Money —Just the Coupon

Convince yourself first. Get the New Edison in your home on free trial. See what a wonderful instrument it is — how it brings the music of the world's greatest singers and players, the sweet, old time melodies, the jokes of the funniest vaudeville actors, all right into your parlor as if they were there **in person.** See for yourself how much you **need** the New Edison in your life. See how much happier it will make your home. Just fill out the coupon and send it in. No money down, no C. O D. You pay us nothing unless you keep the outfit. Send it back if you wish **at our expense.** Or pay only $1.00 after the trial and $3.50 a month until you have paid $36.00. Send the the coupon today.

F. K. Babson
Edison Phonograph Distributors
5012 Edison Block, Chicago, Ill.
Canadian Office : 355 Portage Avenue, Winnipeg. Man.

No obligation to buy in sending this coupon; this is just an application for a Free Trial

F. K. BABSON, Edison Phonograph Dists., 5012 Edison Block, Chicago, Ill.

Dear Mr. Babson:—As per your offer, I should like to hear Mr. Edison's wonderful new style phonograph with the new Diamond Stylus reproducer in my own home on free trial. Also send me twelve records. If I decide to keep the outfit, I will have the privilege of the rock-bottom price of $36.00 direct from you on special terms. I merely agree to take the outfit promptly from the depot, pay the small freight or express charges, and if I do not find it thoroughly satisfactory, I reserve the right to return the outfit at once at your expense. Otherwise, I will send the first payment of $1.00 within forty-eight hours after the free trial or as soon as possible, in no case exceeding one week, and will make monthly payments thereafter of $3.50 for 10 months. The outfit is to remain your property until the last payment has been made.

My name.................................My postoffice.................................R. F. D. No.............. State....................

Shipping Point.................................Ship by.................................Occupation....................

Age....................Married or single....................If steadily employed at a salary please state....................

How long a resident in your neighborhood and your vicinity?....................If there is any possibility of changing

your address during the next year, what will be your next address?....................